



Scr. 918.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK

AND THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

AND THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

AND THE EPISTLES OF THE OTHER APOSTLES

AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

AND THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

AND THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

AND THE BOOK OF DANEEL

AND THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

AND THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

AND THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Staatl. Bibliothek
Regensburg

70/2

A
PARAPHRASE AND NOTES
ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE
GALATIANS AND EPHESIANS:
WITH
DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.
TOGETHER WITH A
CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE TWO EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

BY THE LATE LEARNED
SAMUEL CHANDLER, D. D.

PUBLISHED FROM THE AUTHOR'S MS.
BY NATHANIEL WHITE.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR EDWARD AND CHARLES DILLY.
M.DCC.LXXVII.

PARAPHRASE AND NOTES
ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE
GALATIANS AND EPHESIANS:
WITH

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
TOGETHER WITH A
CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY
ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

BY THE LATE
SAMUEL CHANDLER, D.D.
FURNISHED FROM THE AUTHOR'S MS.
BY NATHANIEL WHITE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR EDWARD AND CHARLES DARTON,
M.DCCCXXIV.

P R E F A C E.

THE work here offered to the world, is the genuine production of the learned and eminent writer whose name it bears. If this declaration stood in need of vouchers, it might be amply supported by the living testimony of several respectable ministers, who were the personal acquaintance and friends of the Author, and who have seen and perused the original copy; which is written in long hand by the Doctor himself, and from various circumstances belonging to it, was evidently intended for the press. Thus much it was thought proper to say in deference to the public, which has, in such cases, an undoubted right to the fullest satisfaction that can be given: though to the attentive and intelligent reader, the work itself will carry such internal proof of its authenticity, as to render this testimony entirely needless.

The manuscript was put into the hands of the Editor by the Doctor's daughter, Mrs. Mary Chandler of Stoke New-

ington, who, from the esteem several of her friends had expressed for it, was induced to hope, that its publication might promote the understanding of the Scriptures, give pleasure and improvement to serious Christians, and do farther credit to the memory of her honoured parent.

There seems to have been something in Dr. Chandler's genius and strength of mind, as well as in the unremitted course of his studies, which eminently fitted him to comment upon the writings of St. Paul, and to follow that deep and accurate reasoner, through his continued chain of argument, so as to preserve the whole distinct and clear, though from the peculiar vigour of the Apostle's imagination, the fervour of his affection, the compass of his thought, and the uncommon fullness of his matter, his Epistles are remarkable for sudden digressions, long parentheses, remote connections, and unexpected returns to subjects already discussed; these, added to many other circumstances common to ancient writings, must necessarily occasion a considerable degree of obscurity and difficulty, which it is the business of the sacred Expositor as much as possible to remove.

In this view, the distinguishing excellence of the following PARAPHRASE seems to be, that the Author adheres most closely and constantly to the spirit of the original, keeps the full idea of the inspired Writer, and only that, as far as he could apprehend it, before him, and never steps aside to pick up any hints, however ornamental, which are not directly conveyed, or strongly implied by the Apostle: so that, not merely in the Text, but in the Paraphrase, we find

find ourselves reading St. Paul himself, though in a language more accommodated to our own conception, and with an illustration which true learning, deep attention to the subject, and uncommon critical sagacity enabled him to afford us. In a word, the Paraphrase is so remarkable for chaste and unmixed Scripture meaning, that the discerning Reader, instead of wishing this publication had been suppressed, will probably regret that any part of St. Paul's Epistles has been omitted by this learned Writer.

The NOTES will abundantly recommend the work to the studious and judicious enquirer, who will find no difficulties artfully evaded, or slightly and superficially touched, no unnecessary parade of reading, though many striking proofs of the most extensive and liberal erudition. And as the Doctor has had recourse to capital and original Authors, and is seldom indebted to preceding Commentators, it may reasonably be imagined that several things will appear to be entirely new; and this will perhaps be found particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the allusion which the Doctor thinks the Apostle makes to the image and temple of Diana, and to the rest of the Ephesian idolatry.

The DOCTRINAL OBSERVATIONS are strictly and immediately drawn from the preceding documents of the sacred Author, without betraying a partiality, for or against any human systems, or favourite opinions. The Writer appears to have placed himself under the influence of the Divine Oracles, that he might discover truth, and follow wherever it should lead him, without undue concern to please,

please, or servile fear of offending any of the different parties of the Christian World.

And in the PRACTICAL and DEVOTIONAL REFLECTIONS those who are fond of studying the Scriptures to improve their tempers, exalt their piety, and regulate their lives, will find those most worthy designs particularly consulted, and the utmost care taken, to bring home the sacred lessons to the hearts of men, and to secure this first and most important intention of a Divine Revelation.

On the whole, the Editor, from the most deliberate view he can take of the following sheets, though the taste of the present times may not be the most favourable to such publications, cannot but entertain a chearful hope, that they will be esteemed a very valuable part of Doctor Chandler's writings, and through the Divine blessing be attended with real success.

November 13th, 1776.

NATHANIEL WHITE.

A P A R A-

A
PARAPHRASE AND NOTES
ON
The EPISTLE of St. PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

A
PARAPHRASE AND NOTES

ON
THE EPISTLE of St. PAUL

TO THE

GALATIANS.

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

A
PARAPHRASE AND NOTES

ON
The EPISTLE of St. PAUL to the GALATIANS,

WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE country of Galatia was part of the lesser Asia, and took its name from the Gauls, who, about two hundred and forty years before Christ, invaded and took possession of it by force of arms. St. Paul preached the gospel here, as we are informed from the Acts of the Apostles, Acts xvi. 6. and afterwards visited the churches he had planted there, in order to strengthen all the disciples, Acts xviii. 23. He converted them to the Christian faith about the year of our Lord fifty-one. The time of writing this epistle was about the year fifty-eight: and the occasion of it was evidently this.

The very nature of St. Paul's office obliging him to make but short stays amongst those whom he converted, persons of corrupt principles and morals insinuated themselves among the new converts, and perverted them from the simplicity of the Christian faith. The doctrine, which this apostle every where preached amongst the Gentiles, was, That the reception and belief of the gospel of Christ was of itself alone sufficient to justify them, i. e. to constitute them the church and people of God, and to secure them the blessing of eternal life and salvation, provided they persevered in their Christian faith and practice.

In opposition to this doctrine, some of the Jewish converts, who held the eternal obligation of the law of Moses, taught, during the apostle's absence, That faith in Christ was not sufficient to render the Gentiles the people and children of God, without their being circumcised, and conforming to the whole ceremonial law of Moses; and therefore, in order to bring the Galatians under

B

this

this bondage, they urged the authority of Peter, James, and John, who being properly the apostles of the Jews, seem never to have persuaded them to renounce and forsake the customs of their fathers and nation, but conformed themselves to the Mosaic ceremonies, and permitted those, whom they converted to the Christian faith, in like manner to conform to them. So that they charged St. Paul with preaching a different gospel from Peter, James, and John, whom these Judaizers represented as pillars of the Christian church, and as superior to Paul, because they had seen Christ, and actually received their instructions and gospel from him.

In answer to these objections, St. Paul, in the first part of this epistle, vindicates the dignity of his apostolic character, and declares of himself, that he was equal to the very chief of the apostles, and that therefore the gospel he preached to the Gentiles, was of equal authority, and equally worthy of belief with the gospel preached by Peter, James, and John; and that therefore there could be no reason why the Galatians should, in any respect, prefer them to him. This is the main argument of the first chapter, and of great part of the second.

After he had thus vindicated his own character and apostleship, he proceeds, at ver. 16. of the second chapter, to the doctrine of justification itself, and proves, by a variety of strong arguments, that the principle of faith was of itself sufficient, without any conformity to the Mosaic law, to constitute believers the people and children of God, and entitle them to the promise and hope of eternal life, chap. III. and IV.

After this, in the two last chapters, he exhorts them to continue steadfast in their Christian liberty, and to adorn their profession by the virtues of an exemplary and holy life. These are the main subjects of this epistle: And though it be not the earliest of those which St. Paul wrote, yet I choose to begin with it; because if we thoroughly understand this, it will be a key for the explication of almost all his other letters to the churches which he planted or confirmed.

He begins his letter with asserting the dignity of his character, and his divine authority and mission, as an apostle, that he might create in them the greater reverence and credit to the reproofs and instructions he was about to give them.

C H A P. I.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

1, 2 **P**AUL an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but **I** PAUL, who am constituted an apostle, not by the order and appointment of men, nor by their

Ver. 1, 2. *Paul an apostle, εν απ' ανδρων,]* not constituted, or sent, or employed as such, by men; no, not by those who were apostles before me, Peter, James, or John, notwithstanding their being esteemed as the pillars of the church. Neither δι' ανδρων, *through men]* through their interposition, or separation, or ministry, as Matthias was nominated and chosen an apostle by the rest, after they had prayed and cast lots. This choice to be an apostle had nothing of the hand or ministry of any men; but he was an apostle by and through Jesus Christ, who appeared to him in person, converted him by a miracle, and sent him to the Gentiles; (See Acts ix. 3. &c. xx. 21. and xxvi. 17. 18.) and through God the Father, who raised him from the dead. The same God and Father, who sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world, and raised him by his almighty power from the dead, chose him

but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead; and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia.

3, 4, 5 Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God even our Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6, 7 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called

their interposition and ministry, but immediately by Jesus Christ, who appeared to me from heaven, and by God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and designed me for this office before my birth; together with my companions, and the whole Christian church, amongst which I now reside, send greeting to, or salute by these presents, all the congregations of Christians in Galatia.

We wish you the favour of God and Christ, and all that happiness which flows from this favour of God, the great and supreme fountain of all good, and from the favour of Christ, who willingly offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins, that he might save us from the corruptions and condemnation of the world we dwell in, according to the pleasure, and in obedience to the will of God his Father, to whom be everlasting honour and praise. Amen.

I wonder that ye are so soon prevailed with to withdraw your affection from me, and to forsake

him that he should know his will, chose him from his mother's womb, called him by his grace, revealed his son in him, immediately constituted him an apostle, that he should preach the gospel of his son amongst the Gentiles. See Acts xxii. 14. Gal. i. 15, 16.

Ibid. And all the brethren which are with me.] The apostle had certain persons, who often accompanied him in his work and travels; Sosthenes, Apollos, Timothy, Titus, Silvanus, and others, who in this respect might be distinguished by the name of brethren. But as Christians in general are frequently styled brethren, so I should rather choose to understand the word here, as denoting the converts in general of that place, from whence St. Paul wrote this Epistle, which is by some thought to be from Rome, by Dr. Mills from Troas, and by others from Ephesus. So that the apostle salutes the several congregations of Christians that were in the country of Galatia, in his own name, and in the name of that congregation, with whom he was then present, that the Galatians might know that they also had seen this epistle to them, and unanimously approved of it.

Ver. 3. Grace be to you, χάρις.] Grace signifies favour and love, but such as is free in its exercise, and undeserved by those towards whom it is shewn, Eph. ii. 8. and is with great propriety placed before peace, which signifies that happiness and prosperity which is the effect of it; because the favour or undeserved grace of God is the only fountain of our happiness as Christians, from whence we derive the blessings of the Gospel state. This grace and peace the apostle wishes them from God the Father, as the original, supreme and indefectible source of both, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Mediator between God and man, by and through whom the Father conveys them to all sincere Christians.

Ver. 4. Who gave himself for our sins.] τὸ δοῦντος εαυτὸν the expression signifies his voluntary submission to the death of the cross, 1 Tim. ii. 6. and offering himself up as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, that he might hereby deliver us from this present evil world, i. e. that he might recover us from the evil principles and practices, and condemnation of it, according to the will of God even our Father, to which God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

According to the will of God.] The death of Christ was the appointment of God his Father, and the efficacy of his death is owing to the Father's will and pleasure, and therefore the glory of our salvation by Christ, is ultimately due to the Father, and should be ascribed by all Christians to him.

Ver. 6. The words, Ye are so soon removed from him that called you,] may be referred to God the Father, who is frequently said to call persons to the knowledge and belief of the gospel: (See 1 Peter ii. 9.) But as St. Paul is vindicating his own character, as he was the instrument of their conversion, and was therefore concerned to support his own doctrine, I think the words, him that called you, must

called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8, 9 *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again; If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

10 *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

11, 12 *But*

forfake the gospel I have preached to you, who have been the instrument of your conversion through the favour of Christ, and calling you into the grace of his covenant; and that ye have embraced a quite different scheme of doctrine from what I delivered to you, under the pretence of its being another and better gospel; though there can be no other than what I have preached to you. The truth is, that there is nothing more in it than this; evil men, with a design to subvert the gospel of Christ, have rendered you uneasy, by raising in you suspicions and doubts about my character and doctrine.

However, notwithstanding the pretences of these deceivers, I am so abundantly certain of the truth and excellency of my doctrine, that I am bold to pronounce, That though I myself, or even an angel from heaven, should preach any thing as gospel different from what I have already taught you, let him be anathema. I repeat it again; If any person whatsoever shall preach as the gospel any thing besides what ye have received from me, let him be anathema.

Probably I may by this incur the displeasure of the Judaizing teachers: Be it so? Am I, as an apostle, more solicitous to obtain the favour of men, or the favour of God? Do I seek to please men only in the doctrines I preach? If this was my ambition to conciliate their friendship, I should no longer act suitable to my character as a servant and apostle of Christ.

Such

must refer to himself, whom they had forsaken to hearken to other teachers, who preached the necessity of observing the law of Moses, and thereby taught a quite different gospel from what he had delivered to them in the name of Christ. And therefore the following words, *into the grace of Christ*, *ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ*, may signify either *by the favour of Christ*, which is the literal rendering. (See verse 15.) or, as our translation hath it, *into the grace of Christ*, i. e. that gracious dispensation of God by Christ, which secures unto believers justification, without any regard to the Mosaic law.

Verse 7. *Which is not another.* *ὅτι ἐστὶν ἄλλο.*] Our translators suppose that the expression means, that though these Judaizing teachers pretended that the doctrine they taught, was another and a better gospel than St. Paul's, yet that in truth there was and could be no other gospel than his; but I think the Greek words, *εἰ μὴ τινες*, which follow, plainly point out another sense, 'viz. that your removal from me who have called you to the grace of Christ, is owing to nothing but this, the crafty endeavours of designing men, to trouble you, and corrupt the gospel of Christ.'

Ver. 8. *Ἀναθεμα.*] This word which we render, *accursed*, doth not signify 'accursed or condemned of God, to the punishments of another world.' This the apostle would not wish to the worst of men; the meaning is, Let him be as a person excommunicated, or wholly cut off from the Synagogue or Church, with whom it was unlawful to have any commerce or correspondence whatsoever. And so it is not properly a wish of the apostle, but a direction to the Galatians how to behave. *Let him be ἀναθεμα*; 'hold him, and treat him as an excommunicated and accursed person.'

Ver. 10. *Πειθω.*] This word, which we render *persuade*, frequently signifies to 'obtain by entreaty,' or, 'to endeavour the friendship and good will of any person.' Thus in Mat. xxviii. 14. the chief priests

11, 12 *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after men; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

13, 14 *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

15, 16 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my*

Such however I am, and I hereby certify you, brethren, that the gospel which I preached unto you, is not what I have been taught by others, or such as depends upon the authority of any man, or what hath been invented to gratify their humours or prejudices; no, I received the doctrine I taught you from no man, nor indeed any other way but by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ.

And to convince you that my zeal to prevent your being brought into subjection to the Jewish rites, proceeds only from a sense of duty, and the instructions I have received from Christ himself, I need only put you in mind, of what you can be no strangers to, viz. my behaviour when I was a Jew; when with excessive violence I persecuted and wasted the church of God; and, through a more abundant zeal for the traditions I received from my forefathers, made a much greater progress in the knowledge of Judaism, than many of my countrymen who were my equals in age.

But after that it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb to the office of an

priests tell the soldiers, whom they corrupted to give a false report: 'If this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you,' i. e. 'prevail with him to be favourable to you, and save you from punishment.' Thus, Acts xii. 20. *πεισαντες Βλασον*, we render, 'having made Blastus their friend,' Vid. Pind. Ol. iii. 28. And, in the apocryphal book of Maccabees, 2 Mac. iv. 45, when Meneleus found himself convicted of his crimes, he promised Ptolemy a large sum of money, *πεισαι τον βασιλεα*, 'to pacify the king,' to prevent his displeasure, and secure his favour. And thus, in the place before us, 'to persuade God,' is to endeavour to secure his approbation; which the apostle assures the Galatians, was his great and only view, as well as his great support under the censures and displeasure of men, for preaching the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel.

Αρτι. Νων.] This word refers to his present condition, as a converted Christian, and his character and office as an apostle of Christ, and is opposed to his character and state when an unconverted Jew; as appears from verse 13, 14.

11, 12. The apostle here begins to obviate one great objection raised against him, viz. That as he had never been a companion of Christ, like the other apostles; so he had not received his gospel from Christ, as they did; and that therefore his doctrine, That the Gentiles might be justified by faith in Christ, without conformity to the law of Moses, was not of equal authority, with the doctrine of the other apostles; who preaching to the Jews, do not seem to have ever persuaded them to forsake the ceremonies of the Mosaic law. To this objection the apostle answers in general, That what he preached as the gospel of Christ, he had not received from any man whatsoever, but by immediate revelation from Christ himself; and then enters upon a distinct proof of it, verse 13, &c.

13, 14 The main thing objected to St. Paul's gospel was, that he taught the Gentiles might be justified without any observation of the law of Moses. To which the apostle answers, That though this was true, yet there could be no reason to imagine, that this proceeded from any other cause but a sense of duty, and the instructions he received from Christ himself, because he had been as zealous for the Law, and the traditions of the fathers, as any man living, and a furious persecutor of the Christians for not observing them; and therefore could not justly be supposed to change his mind, but upon the strongest conviction and reason.

Ver. 15, 16 *Separated me from my mother's womb.*] God says of Jeremiah, 'Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations;' in like manner St. Paul was sanctified, i. e. separated from his mother's womb, i. e. before, or immediately upon his conception; not to final and absolute salvation,

my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him amongst the heathens, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

17 *Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia; and returned again unto Damascus.*

18, 19 *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem, to see Peter,*

an apostle, and in due time graciously called me to this honourable employment; after it thus pleased him to reveal his son to me by a miraculous vision from heaven, and to appoint me to preach his gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles; I did not immediately confer with, nor ask advice of my own countrymen the Jews.

Neither did I go up to Jerusalem, to ask advice of, and take my instructions from Peter, James, and John, who were called to the apostleship before me, but I immediately went into Arabia, and afterwards came back again to Damascus, Acts. ix. 20. where I preached Christ in the synagogues, without having so much as seen, or ever conversed with any of the apostles.

From hence, three years after my conversion, and after I had frequently preached the gospel of Christ,

tion, of which this place says not one word; but to the office and work of an apostle, and to preach the gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles. St. Paul knew there was a possibility of his being a cast away, 1 Cor. ix. 27. And therefore the separation here spoken of, was not an absolute unconditional separation to eternal happiness, but to a certain office and service in the Christian church, upon his faithful execution of which, his receiving the crown of righteousness absolutely depended.

Ibid. *I conferred not with flesh and blood.*] The expression 'flesh and blood,' is used to denote men; thus when Peter confessed to our Lord, 'Thou art Christ the son of the living God;' Jesus answered, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,' Mat. xvi. 17. i. e. no man hath made this discovery; and thus it hath the same meaning in the place before us. But as the apostle speaks of his countrymen and equals in age, in the verses before, I apprehend he particularly means them, and that he intends to assure the Galatians, that notwithstanding his former zeal for the law, and the traditions of the Jews, yet that after his extraordinary conversion he had no longer any dependance on them, nor sought the least direction from the wisest amongst them.

Verses 17, 18. These verses contain another argument to prove, that the apostle did not receive the knowledge of Christ's gospel from men, and particularly not from the apostles themselves, who were the proper persons he ought to have applied to for instruction, had he needed it; and the argument is evident and conclusive, viz. that for three years after his conversion and preaching, he never saw or conversed with the apostles, and consequently could not derive his knowledge of Christ, or his gospel from them. And the argument put in form is this;

'If I preached the gospel three years before I saw or conversed with the apostles, I could not receive the knowledge of the gospel from them. But, &c. therefore, &c.'

That he did not see them for three years after his conversion and preaching, he proves by giving them an account where he spent them, viz. some time at Damascus, some part in Arabia, and the rest at Damascus after his second coming there.

He farther confirms the same point, by telling them, that when after these three years, he went up to Jerusalem, he stayed there but fifteen days, and saw none of the apostles but Peter, and James; and that therefore, if his doctrine or gospel was contrary to that of Peter, and James, as these false teachers pretended, it was evident he could not receive his gospel from them, nor from any other of the apostles, whom he did not so much as see when he was at Jerusalem. And he concludes this account with a solemn appeal to God, for the truth of what he said.

There is only one thing more that I would observe, to set this matter quite clear; which is, that there is this difference between the gospel of St. Paul, and that of the other apostles, viz. that as the other apostles had the gospel of the circumcision committed unto them, St. Paul had the gospel of the uncircumcision committed unto him, i. e. they were appointed to preach to the Jews, and St. Paul to the Gentiles. In consequence of this, as the gospel was not intended to make any alteration in the polity and government of nations and kingdoms, the gospel did not oblige the Jews to forsake the laws and ordinances of Moses, though indeed they contributed nothing to men's justification be-

for

Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother.

Christ, I went to Jerusalem, where, when I tried to join myself with the disciples, they were all afraid of me; but Barnabas brought me to Peter, Acts ix. 26, 27, with whom I stayed only fifteen days; nor did I see any other of the apostles, except James the brother of our Lord.

20 Now the things which I write to you, behold, before God, I lie not.

And I appeal to God as my witness and judge, that the things I now write to you are exactly true.

The Heads of Doctrine contained in this passage are these :

1. That the Father is in a peculiar sense God, to whom is due glory for ever and ever, ver. 4. *God, even our Father, to whom be glory, &c.*
2. That God the Father raised up Christ from the dead, ver. 1.
3. That true prosperity is the effect of the favour of God and Christ, and to be desired and prayed for from them, ver. 3.
4. That it should be the great care of men, in their several callings and stations of life, to endeavour to approve themselves to God. This is consequential from what the apostle says, ver. 10.
5. That Christ gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins, that he might deliver us from the principles and practices of an evil world, ver. 4.
6. That Christ's offering himself for this purpose, was in obedience to God his Father's will. *According to the will of God, even our Father,* ver. 4.
7. That the glory of our salvation from sin by Christ, is to be ultimately ascribed to God the Father. *To whom be glory for ever and ever,* ver. 5.
8. That the gospel taught by St. Paul is the true gospel of Christ, which he received by immediate revelation from God and Christ, ver. 1, 11, &c.
9. That God is sometimes pleased to separate persons even before their birth, i. e. to design them for particular offices and duties in life, according to his gracious will and pleasure, ver. 15, 16.

fore God; and therefore neither Peter, nor the rest of the apostles, appear to have forsaken the Jewish customs themselves, nor to have pressed the Jewish converts to abstain from the use of them; because they were the national laws of that people, whereby they were made a distinct commonwealth from all other nations of the earth.

On the other hand, St. Paul was in a peculiar manner the apostle of the Gentiles, who were born under no obligation to observe the laws of Moses. And therefore the pressing them to circumcision, and obedience to the Mosaic law, as necessary to salvation, was perverting the gospel of Christ, and overturning the fundamental article of it, viz. that faith in Christ, or the belief of the gospel, was sufficient of itself to constitute persons the children of God, and secure them the blessing of eternal life, if they walked worthy their vocation, and persevered in their Christian faith and practice; so that, as all the apostles agreed in this, that faith alone was sufficient to reconcile sinners to God, they preached absolutely the same gospel; and the only difference in their conduct was, that St. Paul absolutely forbid the Gentiles circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic law, because they were under no natural or national obligation to observe it; whereas the other apostles, whose ministry was peculiarly confined to the Jews, never forbid the Jews the use of their national law, because they were born under it, and the observing it by them was not in the least inconsistent with their profession of Christianity. And this shews the wickedness and impiety, as well as the unreasonableness and folly of persecuting the Jews, for their adherence to the law of Moses; especially as Christ himself hath declared: *I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill,* Matt. v. 17.

10. That

10. That such persons, who by false doctrines trouble the Christian church, by perverting the grace and gospel of Christ, are not to be owned as brethren, nor to be conversed with as members of the church, whatever be their station, or character in it, ver. 8, 9. They are not indeed to be cut off or destroyed, or persecuted by men, but to be disowned as brethren: Nor are they to be disowned as brethren, for any errors or mistakes, which are not real and absolute perversions of the gospel of Christ.

11. Finally, that solemn appeals to God are sometimes lawful, ver. 20. viz. in cases of great importance, that need such a solemn confirmation, and where the truth cannot be so well ascertained without it.

To conclude therefore, since we have so firm a foundation for our faith as Christians, since the gospel we embrace was not the invention of men, but taught us by immediate revelation from God himself; let us not suffer ourselves to be removed from the grace of Christ. But since God hath raised him from the dead, after he gave himself for our sins, let us be careful that we do not forfeit the purchased inheritance by a conformity to the sinful customs and practices of an evil world; but, by a steady perseverance in our Christian faith and course, secure to ourselves grace and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory in the churches, world without end. Amen.

St. Paul goes on to vindicate his office and character as an apostle, and to shew himself equal to James, and Peter, and John, who were esteemed as the pillars of, or as persons of the greatest dignity and eminence in, the church.

TEXT.

21 *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Silicia,*

22 *And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ.*

23, 24 *But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preached the faith, which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me.*

PARAPHRASE.

After this, when I left Jerusalem, I went to Cæsaria in Syria, and to Tarsus the place of my birth in Silicia, Acts ix. 30.

And during all this while, I was not personally known to any of the Christian congregations in Judea.

All they had heard or known of me was this; that I who had before persecuted them with great rage and cruelty, was now become a preacher of that religion and gospel of Christ, which once I endeavoured to suppress and destroy. And on this account they praised God for my conversion.

CHAP. II.

1 *Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*

2 *And*

After this, about fourteen years from my conversion, I went up again to Jerusalem, together with Barnabas, Acts xv. 2. and took with me Titus my disciple, as companion in our journey.

And

Verses 22, 24 This part of St. Paul's history evidently proves, that he was during this space intirely independent of the apostles at Jerusalem, and did not preach by their order, or that of the churches of Judea; and that the gospel which he taught was even approved by those congregations, since they would not have praised God on his account, if they had formed an ill opinion of the doctrine he preached.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach amongst the Gentiles; but privately to them, which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

4 And that because of false brethren, unawares brought in,

And this journey I undertook in obedience to a divine order I received, and there gave an account of that gospel which I had preached amongst the Gentiles, and of that demonstration of the Spirit which attended me; not indeed at first to the whole body of Christians at Jerusalem, but particularly and severally to those who were in greatest reputation amongst them, such as Peter, and James, that my past or future labours in preaching the gospel, might not by any means be rendered ineffectual.

And to shew you that even then I was not inconsistent with myself, nor afraid to own the gospel I had preached, and that no opposition was made to it by those at Jerusalem; Titus my companion, though an uncircumcised Greek, was not compelled by them to be circumcised, as he must have been, had they believed circumcision necessary to the Gentiles.

And the reason, why I took an uncircumcised person with me, and kept him at Jerusalem uncircumcised,

Ver. 2. *Κατὰ αποκάλυψιν*, i. e. in consequence of some divine intimation that was given him. St. Paul's journey's being frequently directed and ordered by some immediate revelation of the spirit of God. (See Acts xvi. 7. 10. 22.) The immediate occasion of the journey was the doctrine taught by some Jewish Christians, who came down to Antioch, (Acts xv. 1.) relating to the necessity of the Gentiles being circumcised; this occasioned great dissention and disputation in that church. And therefore finally to settle this dispute, the Spirit of God moved St. Paul to take this journey to Jerusalem, that an unanimous resolution might be taken there upon the affair. Nor could there be any method taken, more proper to settle this controversy, than to have the judgment of the chief apostles, and the whole church at Jerusalem concerning it. Since no one could imagine, that they who had been bred up to, and continued in the use of the ceremonies of the law of Moses, would ever dispense with them, or set the Gentiles free from them, but upon the fullest conviction that this was the will of God, and agreeable to the design of Jesus Christ. And this was the effect, since the apostles and whole church of Jerusalem unanimously agreed not to put the Mosaic yoke upon the neck of the Gentile Christians. St. Paul indeed did not communicate this matter at first to the church at Jerusalem in general, but privately.

Κατ' ἰδίαν. You have it in the margin, *severally*; or, as it is elsewhere rendered, *aside*, (Mark vii. 33.) or, *apart by themselves*, (Mark ix. 2.) When he first came to Jerusalem, he applied himself to the apostles, to acquaint them with the doctrine he had preached, and the controversy moved at Antioch. He calls them simply, the

Τοις δοκῶσι. Literally, the men of "appearance;" and at ver. 6. *δοκῶντας εἶναι τι*; the men who appeared to be somewhat, i. e. persons of highest character and estimation. For though this word signifies to appear, or seem, yet it is not always used in a diminutive or disparaging sense, but to denote what they really are, and what others think them to be. Thus, *τῶν ἑλλήνων δοκῶντες διαφέρειν*, Ælian. Var. H. L. 14. c. 15. are persons esteemed as the principal men of Greece. And Aristotle is said, *σοφὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ ὢν, καὶ εἶναι δοκῶν*, "both to be, and to be esteemed as a wise man." Id. C. 14. c. 1.

Left by any means I should run, or had run in vain, i. e. lest my past or future labours should be fruitless; this is a metaphor frequently used by the apostle, (Gal. v. 7. Heb. xii. 1.) and is taken from the ancient games, one of which was running; and he was said to run in vain, who lost the prize, and whose labour thereby became ineffectual.

Ver. 4. He calls the Judaizing Christians *false brethren*, not upon account of their being Jews, and using themselves to Jewish ceremonies; but because they were designing and deceitful men, who intended to ensnare, if possible, this apostle; and to take some advantage from his conduct or doctrine,

in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.

5 *To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

6 *But of these who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me : God accepteth no man's person. For they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me.*

7 *But contrarywise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.*

8 *(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles.)*

circumcised, was, that those false brethren might have no ground to charge me with concealing or varying from my former doctrine or practice ; who were craftily brought into the assembly, and who came to it only that they might treacherously spy out and betray our liberty, which as Gentiles we have under the gospel, and so bring us under bondage to the law of Moses.

But all their arts and practices were to no purpose. Far from courting or temporising with them in any thing, I resolutely withstood them, and did not yield and submit to them, no not for a single hour, that the Gentiles might maintain the truth of the gospel, and continue free from the bondage of the law of Moses.

And as to the apostles, let their reputation and esteem be as great as they can, yet their character in this affair signifies nothing to me or my doctrine, since God regardeth not the persons or seeming greatness of any men. Nor did they, notwithstanding their supposed weight and authority, add any thing to me, either by confirming my apostleship, teaching me any thing new that I did not know before, or making any alteration in the doctrine I had preached.

No : on the contrary, they plainly saw that I was entrusted to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles, even as Peter principally was to preach it to the circumcised Jews :

(Because the same God who actuated Peter, and gave him the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to fit him to be an apostle to the Jews, equally influenced me, and furnished me with the same gifts to qualify me to be the apostle of the Gentiles.)

in prejudice of Christian liberty, and to lay the yoke of Moses upon the neck of the Gentile converts. In their freedom from this consisted their liberty, and this doctrine of Christian liberty is what the apostle calls at ver. 5. the truth of the gospel ; the true gospel unadulterated, and uncorrupted with Jewish rites and ceremonies.

Ver. 6. *God accepteth no man's person*, προσωπον κ λαμβανει.] This is an Hebrew form of speech, and denotes a regard to men's external circumstances, characters, and appearances. In this sense, " God accepteth not the person even of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor," (Job xxxiv. 19.) Truth and righteousness being the only objects of his acceptance and approbation.

In conference added nothing to me.] The words *in conference* are not in the original, nor do I see of what use they are in the translation, the sense being full and complete without. ' Let the qualifications and characters of the apostles be what they will, yet they were of no signification to me ; they added nothing to me, neither dignity to my character, nor truth to my doctrine ; nor did they pretend to make the least alteration in the gospel I had taught.'

9 *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas, the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*

10 *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

And therefore James, and Peter, and John, who were esteemed at Jerusalem, as the pillars and great supporters of the Christian church, when they saw the favour of God towards me, and the extraordinary gifts that were conferred on me; far from questioning my apostolic character, or censuring the gospel I preached, owned me and Barnabas as brethren, and in token of it gave us the right-hand of fellowship, acknowledging that God had constituted us apostles of the Gentiles, and that we should continue to preach to them, as they would to preach to the circumcised Jews.

And the only thing they desired of us was, that in our charitable collections we would remember the poor Christians in Judea, and to this I was abundantly led by my own strong affection and inclination.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

On this passage of scripture, which contains the account of St. Paul's behaviour at Jerusalem, and of the sentiments and conduct of the apostles, who were in that city, towards him; I would make the following remarks.

I. That the journey to Jerusalem, which he speaks of at ver. 1. was that which we have recorded in the xvth of the Acts; when, upon the occasion of the dispute at Antioch between some Jewish Christians who came from Judea, and Paul and Barnabas, it was determined by the Antiochian church to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders there, for their judgment about the question, Whether the Gentile converts were to be circumcised after the manner of Moses? The apostles, elders, and whole church, assembled in that city, unanimously decreed in the negative, and thereby confirmed St. Paul's doctrine and gospel, which he had preached amongst the nations. St. Paul's conversion was in the year of Christ thirty-five, and this journey to Jerusalem in the year forty-nine, which makes just fourteen years.

II. That the design of this journey to Jerusalem was, to communicate to the apostles the gospel which he preached amongst the Gentiles, viz. their being made the church or people of God, only by faith in Christ, without submitting to the law of Moses, ver. 2. And the apostle here gives a specimen of his integrity, honesty, and courage; "I communicated," says he, "that gospel which I preached, privately," or, as the word should be rendered, "particularly and

Ver. 9. *Seemed to be pillars.*] As pillars are the supports of a building, so the three apostles here mentioned, were esteemed as pillars in the church, i. e. persons of greatest authority, and eminence in the Jewish church, at Jerusalem. James, as the brother of our Lord; Cephas or Peter, because of his confession, on which the church of Christ was to be built; and John, as the beloved disciple of our blessed Lord: it is probable also, that the churches of Judea and Jerusalem, were peculiarly under the inspection of these three apostles; the other nine not being present at this council of Jerusalem; but in all likelihood employed in preaching the gospel amongst their brethren in other countries. These three

Gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. The giving the right-hand was a token of friendship, and in this instance it was an acknowledgment of a parity in office and dignity.

“severally,” “to them who were of reputation,” i. e. ‘immediately to the apostles themselves, as one assured that my gospel was from Christ, and that the greatest of his apostles could have no objection against it:’ And this I did, lest by any means “I should run, or had run in vain,” i. e. ‘to prevent the apostles being impressed with a false notion of my doctrine, and their censuring and contradicting it, and thereby weakening the faith of those I had already converted, or hindering my usefulness in my future endeavours to convert others.’ Some good interpreters give this turn to the words; ‘lest any of the Judaizing teachers should pretend that my doctrine was not agreeable to the apostles, and so boast that both my present and past endeavours, in converting the Gentiles, were wholly vain and ineffectual.’ The former sense I prefer, as much more agreeable to the connection and context.

III. It should be farther remarked, that the conduct of this apostle was agreeable to his doctrine: When he went to Jerusalem, he took with him Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, but a converted Christian: But did he, or the apostles at Jerusalem, compel him to be circumcised? Did he thus contradict his principles, in compliance with the prejudices of the Jewish converts, or to gratify their superstitious fondness for the law of Moses, or to stop their unreasonable jealousies or complaints against him? No: Titus, who, as a Greek, was born under no obligation to the law of Moses, came with the apostle to Jerusalem, stayed with him there, and went away from it uncircumcised. And though some of the Jewish Christians seem to have insisted on his submission to that ceremony, and particularly the Pharisees, who declared it necessary to circumcise all the Gentile converts, and to command them to keep the law of Moses, as we learn from Acts xv. 5.; yet St. Paul boldly opposed them: “We did not give place and submit to them,” says he, “so much as for an hour,” i. e. not in one instance, or for a single moment. And he assigns these reasons for it, viz.

1. To prevent the ill use, which some Judaizing Christians would have made of it, ver. 4. They were privately brought into the assembly, where the apostles, and others of reputation, were debating about this affair. The end of their coming was as spies to betray the liberty of the Gentile converts, and to bring them into bondage to the law of Moses; and this they would have the more easily effected, had the apostles ordered, and St. Paul consented, to the circumcision of Titus. For this would have given them an occasion to have weakened St. Paul’s character amongst the Gentile churches; they would have argued, if the apostles at Jerusalem had ordered him to be circumcised, that the Gentile converts ought every where to be circumcised, which would have been subverting St. Paul’s gospel; and if he had consented to it, they would have argued that he had contradicted his own doctrine, and was therefore no longer worthy to be regarded as an apostle of Christ: And therefore the apostle was inflexible in this point, and would not make the least submission to his adversaries. Especially,

2. “That the truth of the gospel might continue with the Gentiles,” ver. 5. i. e. that they might continue in their profession of the gospel, in its native purity and simplicity, and particularly in their enjoyment of their Christian liberty, and freedom from bondage to Jewish ceremonies, which was one of the truths of the gospel of Christ, and necessary to promote the success, and maintain the dignity of the Christian religion.

IV. I would farther observe, that though the apostle Paul communicated his gospel to the chief apostles at Jerusalem, for very good reasons; yet he expressly declares,

declares, it was not because he owned them as his superiors, or needed to receive any addition to his gospel, or real confirmation of it from them; "as to those, who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were," says he, "it maketh no matter to me; nor did they in conference add any thing to me," ver. 6. 'I myself was equally with them called to be an apostle of Christ; and when I conferred with them, they added nothing to me either of authority or knowledge.' On the contrary, they saw and acknowledged that he was constituted by the same power to be the apostle of the Gentiles, as they were to be apostles of the Jews, ver. 7. and that he was furnished with the same extraordinary gifts that they themselves were, and had the same wonderful proofs of his divine calling, ver. 8. And accordingly, Peter, James, and John, who were esteemed the pillars of the church, and the chief amongst the apostles, acknowledged him and Barnabas to be really and truly apostles; and as such gave them their right hand, in token of their owning them as their brethren, and that they were peculiarly sent by Christ, to preach the gospel to the Heathen, as they were to the circumcised Jews.

You see by this short account of the apostle's history, how fully he proves the point he aimed at; that he was not an apostle of men or by men; not called, or constituted, or sent by the order, appointment, or ministry of the apostles themselves; but separated to the apostleship by God himself before his birth, and called to and fitted for it immediately by the grace of Christ. And the apostle's insisting on this was not from any thing of vain glory and pride, but was necessary to the vindication of the gospel he had preached amongst the Gentiles, and to preserve the Galatian converts from the seduction of those false teachers, who would have corrupted the religion of our blessed Saviour, by blending with it the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law. This is the apostle's design in this first part of his letter, and you see with what strength and variety of arguments he supports it.

The DOCTRINAL TRUTHS contained in this passage are these.

1. That God is no respecter of persons, ver. 6. "God accepteth no man's person," i. e. merely for his external qualifications, or for his rank and dignity, or supposed eminency amongst men. Truth and righteousness, sincerity of heart, and usefulness of life, are the things approved by God, and to which he will ever pay a favourable regard. External circumstances may secure worldly esteem and respect; and persons of high character, and reputation, and office, may expect and demand peculiar reverence and subjection from others; but all these things contribute nothing to God's acceptance, nor are in the least regarded in the judgment he passes on mankind.

2. That St. Paul was the chosen apostle of the Gentiles, and qualified to preach the gospel amongst them by the special grace of Christ, and by the extraordinary operation of God upon him, in the heavenly and spiritual gifts which were communicated to him, ver. 7, 8. And this, I observe, in opposition to the pretences of the Romanists, who give to St. Peter the primacy of the whole Christian church, and to the Popes the universal pastorship, as successors to St. Peter. But this portion of scripture absolutely confutes all such pretences; for allowing there was a real superiority in Peter, yet it was not a superiority over the whole church, but only over the churches of the circumcision, or the Jewish converts, ver. 7. The
gospel

gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter: And again, ver. 8. God wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision; so that Peter's commission as an apostle was only to the Jews, who were the sheep he was in a peculiar manner to gather and feed; and accordingly, James, and Peter, and John agreed to go unto the circumcision, ver. 9. and to preach the gospel to the Jews, as their peculiar province. And by consequence, if the Popes of Rome are St. Peter's successors, they can succeed him only in his province, they can be bishops only over the Jewish churches, and should labour principally for their conversion.

The charge of converting the Gentiles was by God and Christ committed to St. Paul; the apostles saw and acknowledged that the gospel of the uncircumcision was entrusted to him, ver. 7. that God wrought powerfully in him to fit him for this work; and in consequence of this they owned his mission, and agreed that he should go unto the heathen, as they did to the Jews. And therefore, as the Papists do not pretend, that St. Paul was ever bishop of Rome, it is impossible the Popes can be his successors, and by consequence impossible that they can have any claim to be universal bishops over the churches of the Gentile converts. But

3. The gospel we embrace is the doctrine of God, and its original immediately from God and Christ, and therefore deserves and challenges our belief and obedience; this is the main argument the apostle labours to prove, and which he confirms by the strongest reasons. The religion he preached was not founded upon human authority, nor did it proceed from the inspiration of human wisdom; it had nothing human, it was directly and intirely from the God of grace and truth. He was sent by Christ himself to the Gentiles, and he had all the signs of an apostle attending him; he was separated by God before his birth to this high and sacred office: To fit him for it, his conversion was miraculous, and his revelations from heaven extraordinary; so that what he preached was in truth the word of God, and what as Christians we are taught from him, it is unquestionably the will of God that we should embrace and submit to it: This shews the dignity of our profession, the excellency of our religion, and the reasonableness and indispensable necessity of our obeying it.

RULES OF CONDUCT.

1. That the conversion of the enemies of truth, to the acknowledgment and belief of the gospel, should occasion our sincere thanksgivings to Almighty God. chap. I. ver. 23, 24.

2. That it should be the care of all faithful ministers to take all prudent methods to prevent their past or future labours in the gospel of Christ from failing of their desired success, chap. II. ver. 2. by communicating the doctrines they preach, as there is occasion, to persons of reputation, ability, and usefulness in the church of God.

3. That Christians ought not ever in any instance, or for any time, to give place or submit themselves to any who would bring them into bondage to rites and ceremonies, contrary to the simplicity of the Christian religion, and the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; but should adhere to the uncorrupted truth and purity of the gospel, ver. 4, 5.

4. That the characters, and reputations, and high stations, of any particular men
in

in the Christian church, are never to be regarded in opposition to truth ; since religion depends not on the greatest human authority, but solely on the revelation and word of God, ver. 6. And finally,

5. That ministers and Christians should be ever ready to remember the poor, and continually disposed to works of charity and goodness, ver. 10. Christianity is designed to open the heart, to enlarge the tender affections, and warm men with the most diffusive benevolence ; and though the character of a punctually just man is commendable, yet he who, in imitation of God, whose tender mercies are over all his works ; and in conformity to the example of Christ, who went about doing good ; and from a firm belief of the rewards of a future state ; I say, he who, from these principles, and with these views, is most bountiful to the poor, and most ready to all works of mercy and goodness, is the most amiable man, and the most excellent Christian ; and under both characters is entitled to the most bountiful recompence from God.

St. Paul having by a great variety of proofs shewn that his commission and instructions, as the apostle of the Gentiles had nothing of human authority and wisdom in them, but were immediately and intirely from God and Christ ; proceeds to introduce the argument of justification, by relating a difference that happened between himself and St. Peter, and the reprimand he gave to this great apostle, for his dissimulation in his conduct to the Gentile converts.

T E X T.

11 *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

12 *For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles : but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

P A R A P H R A S E.

So far was I from acknowledging any kind of superiority in Peter, that, on the contrary, when he came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because his conduct deserved to be censured, and condemned. And the occasion was this.

Whilst he was in this city, he freely conversed and did eat with the Gentile converts, though uncircumcised, without regarding the difference of men, and thereby owned them as brethren in Christ, and that they were under no obligation to the Jewish law ; till at length there came several of the Jewish converts from Jerusalem, where James then resided. But, upon the arrival of these persons, Peter withdrew and separated himself from the Gentile converts, because of their uncircumcision, and would no longer asso-

Ver. 11. *κατεγνωσμενος ην.* He was to be blamed.] This the original word unquestionably signifies, but it signifies also "condemned." Thus condemned malefactors are called simply *οι κατεγνωσμενοι*, Aelian. V. Hist. 14. 43. And this St. Paul seems to mean in the place before us ; since Peter's behaviour seemed not only worthy a gentle reproof, but to be intirely condemned, as being contrary to his own knowledge, and tending to subvert the simplicity of the gospel ; as will appear from what St. Paul adds.

Ver. 12. *συνεδειν.* Eat with.] It was not only unlawful for the Jews to eat many things which the Heathens did, but they esteemed it a sin to eat with them, and thought themselves defiled hereby ; but St. Peter, who was taught by a vision to call nothing unclean, did eat with the Gentile converts at Antioch, esteeming it neither a sin to eat with them, nor to eat of their meats without distinction. See ver. 14.

ciate

13 *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

14 *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel: I said unto Peter before them all: If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

15, 16 *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the*

ciate and converse with them, for fear of offending and incurring the displeasure of these circumcised Christians, and giving them an occasion of forsaking Christianity; and thereby acted as though he had believed circumcision necessary to constitute the Gentiles the people of God.

But this was real dissimulation in Peter, and acting a part contrary to his own knowledge and conviction; and yet it had so bad an effect, that all the Jewish Christians who before had freely conversed with the Gentile converts, separated from them as Peter did; insomuch, that even Barnabas himself, though constituted an apostle of the uncircumcised Gentiles, was prevailed upon to follow their example.

But when I saw them thus acting contrary to the true spirit and intention of the gospel, I publicly rebuked Peter, and said to him in the presence of them all; If thou who art a natural Jew, dost sometimes live after the manner of the Gentiles, without regarding the ceremonies of the Jewish law; why dost thou, in contradiction to thine own practice, oblige by thy example the Gentiles to conform to the law of Moses?

This is contrary to what we have taught and acted as Christians, since we who are by birth and

Ver. 13. *συναπηνχθη. Was carried away.]* *απαγω* signifies to carry, or drive away a person against his will, *Ælian. p. 715. 711. comp.* Here it signifies to be carried away by the force of authority and example, in opposition to conviction and judgment.

Ver. 14. *Not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.]* The truth of the gospel, is the gospel kept unmixed with the Jewish law; and not to *walk uprightly*, or, as the word signifies, *directly according to the truth of the gospel*, is not to behave agreeable to that great design of the gospel, which was to take away the necessity of the law of Moses to justification. And herein Peter and Barnabas did not walk directly according to the gospel truth, since they avoided the fellowship of the Gentile Christians, and thereby led them to conclude, that it was necessary they should submit to circumcision, as well as believe in Christ.

Ibid. *Αναγκάζεις. Thou compellest.]* Though this word frequently signifies to compel by force and violence, yet it is as frequently used to denote compulsion of another kind, moral compulsion, to compel by precept. Thus Christ *constrained his disciples*, i. e. commanded them to get into a ship, *Matt. xiv. 22.* to compel by persuasion and intreaty, *compel them to come in, that my house may be full*; to compel by an unjust accusation, thus Paul *was compelled to appeal to Cæsar*, *Acts. xxviii. 19.* to compel by the influence of example, thus St. Peter *compelled* the Gentiles to observe the law of Moses, by separating himself from the uncircumcised Christians, and thereby leading them to believe the observation of the Mosaic law, necessary to their justification.

Ver. 16 *Δικαισταί. Justified.]* This word hath a threefold acceptation. 1st, *To declare a person just and righteous, who really is so in himself*; in this sense it seems to be used, *Luke vii. 29.* where the publicans are said to have *justified God*, i. e. to acknowledge and declare him to be righteous and holy. 2dly, Sometimes a person is said to be justified, who *is condemned to death*, and punished in consequence of his sentence; because the law hath no farther demand or claim upon him. Thus *δικαιουν τινα θανατω* is to punish with death, *Ælian, V. H. 5. 18.* and a man is said to be *δικαιωμενος*, or *justified*,

the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified and nation Jews, and consequently entitled to all the privileges of the Jewish state, and not born of the corrupt and profligate Gentiles; we being fully convinced, that a man cannot be justified by the law of Moses, but only by believing in Jesus Christ; even we, notwithstanding all our Jewish privileges, have

justified, who is actually punished, as justice is done upon him; and to this sense of the word St. Paul evidently alludes, Rom. vi. 7. he that is dead is justified *from sin*; sin ought to have no farther interest in him, or demand upon him, any more than a law hath upon a person punished with death; and 3dly, It signifies, *by grace or favour*, to pronounce a sinner, or criminal, acquitted from the obligations of his guilt, and to reinstate him in all forfeited privileges, as though he was in reality a just and righteous person, and had never offended; or, in other words, to justify a criminal, is to give him, by a free pardon, a new right to forfeited life, and to all the benefits and blessings attending it; whereby he becomes just in the eye of the law, which hath no farther demand of punishment upon him: And it is in this sense that St. Paul useth the word, *justify*, in his letter to the Galatians, and in that to the Romans. One place or two of scripture will confirm this account; St. Paul in his sermon to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, tells them; *be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Acts xiii. 38, 39. From hence it is evident, that justification includes the forgiveness of sins; now the forgiveness of sin is the same thing as the remission of deserved punishment, and if the forgiveness be full and intire, it necessarily implies the restoration of the offender to all the privileges forfeited by sin. Upon this account, God is said to *justify the ungodly*, i. e. upon his belief of the gospel, to forgive his past sins, to accept him as though he had never offended, and to bring him into a state of favour and salvation, Rom. iv. 5. Hence *peace with God, and rejoicing in hope of his glory*, is declared by St. Paul to be the immediate effect of justification, Rom. v. 1, 2. because pardon implies reconciliation with the person pardoning, and because *the gift of God by Christ is eternal life and glory*. The question therefore about justification, of which St. Paul treats in this letter to the Galatians, is plainly and precisely this; how the Gentiles, who were bred up in the most wicked and idolatrous practices, who were *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*; how such persons as these might obtain remission of their past sins, become reconciled to God, and restored to the hope of eternal life? Whether faith in Christ were sufficient for this purpose, or whether it was farther necessary they should be circumcised, and submit to the law of Moses? And keeping this account of justification in view, we shall find St. Paul to be a very just and exact reasoner, even though we should leave his character of being an inspired person, wholly out of our account. And here give me leave to set before you, his first argument in form, drawn from the conduct of St. Peter, and the other apostles themselves, and which he makes use of to convince them, of not having behaved well towards the Gentiles, in leading them by their example to observe the law of Moses. The argument is this.

If we who are Jews, and born under the law, have nevertheless believed in Christ for justification, then it is evident that we think justification is not to be obtained by the law of Moses, but by believing in Christ.

But we have believed in Christ for justification:

Therefore we think justification is not to be obtained by the law of Moses, but by believing in Christ. Again,

If we who are Jews, believe that justification cannot be had by the law of Moses, but by faith in Christ, then we are to be blamed to compel the Gentiles to conform to the law of Moses for justification.

But we believe that justification cannot be had, &c.

Therefore we are to be blamed for compelling, &c.

You see these arguments of St. Paul are undeniable and conclusive, upon the foot of plain and solid reason.

Ver. 16. *The works of the law*, i. e. by the law of Moses.] This is evident not only from the whole series of his argument, but from chap. III. ver. 19. where he tells us that *the law was added because of transgression*, and *ordained by angels in the hands of a Mediator*, which is true of the law of Moses, but of no law before or since; and in this sense you are to understand *the law* throughout this argument, as denoting the law of Moses in opposition to *faith*, or the Christian dispensation; the funda-

tified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17 *But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

have believed in Christ for this very purpose, that we might be justified by faith in him; thereby renouncing our hopes of justification by the law of Moses, because we know that no man can be justified by that law.

But if whilst we thus seek to be justified by believing in Christ, we are yet under the condemnation of sin, as we must be if the observation of the law of Moses be necessary to justify us, will not the consequence of this be, that Christ is the minister of sin, as having left us under the guilt and condemnation of it?

18 *For*

But

mental, distinguishing article of which is faith in Christ. Some persons have understood by the law here, the law of perfect unsinning obedience, given to man in innocence; but of such a law the apostle hath not a single word or intimation; it is the law of Moses against which he argues, as he himself expressly asserts, chap. III. v. 17. where he says, *that the law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise to Abraham*, which exactly agrees to the time of the delivery of the Mosaic law from M. Sinai; and unless we understand *the law* in this sense, there is neither connection nor strength in any part of the apostle's argument.

Ibid. The faith of Christ.] The great question the apostle debates in this epistle, is, How the Gentiles, who were not God's people, but *dead in trespasses and sins*, should become justified, or rendered the people of God, put into a state of salvation, and be made equally with the Jews, heirs of eternal life. This the apostle declares is by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, i. e. by sincerely believing the gospel of Christ, without conforming to the law of Moses. The essential characteristic of a Christian, is believing in Christ Jesus, believing him to be the true Messiah, and his religion to be from God; now as many as thus believed in Christ, they had *power to become the children of God*, were owned and accepted of God, as the members of his church and kingdom, and entitled to all the promises of the gospel, and were certain to receive the blessings promised, if they continued steadfast and immovable in their Christian profession; and this whatever had been their past sins, either as Jews or idolatrous Gentiles; their *confessing with their mouth the Lord Jesus, and believing in their heart, that God raised him from the dead*, justified and saved them, i. e. secured to them, by the grace and promise of God, the forgiveness of their past sins, and brought them into a state of salvation and acceptance; so that to be justified by the faith of Christ, is to be esteemed and accepted of God, as persons free from all past obligations of punishment, immediately as the consequence of a sincere belief of the gospel, not only without the merit of any past works, but contrary to deserts of past sinfulness and guilt; and in this sense faith alone, without any consideration of works whatsoever, is that by which sinners are justified, since it was by this that Jews and Gentiles became the members of the Christian church, and entitled to the benefits of redemption by Christ Jesus. I would only farther observe, that this justification or pardon extended only to those sins, which were committed antecedent to their conversion to Christianity, and not to any of those sins they should or might commit afterwards. The benefit of this justification might be lost, just as a pardoned justified criminal may forfeit his life after pardon, by new transgressions; justification, in St. Paul's argument, is the restoration only of sinners to grace and favour, by the free mercy of God pardoning past sins; their continuance in this grace, depended on their continued obedience to the gospel, and their final justification, on their being *faithful to the death*; so that in these two cases the sense of the word *justification* widely differs. A Jew or Gentile converted to Christianity was justified, because constituted just in the eye of the law by a free pardon, though he had deserved death; so that here he is considered as an obnoxious criminal; but at the future tribunal of the great God, men will be justified, or pronounced, and treated as just and righteous, only according as their works shall be found good; and in this sense they are considered properly as righteous persons, who have complied with the terms of the gospel covenant, and have purified themselves *even as Christ is pure*.

Ver. 17. Found sinners.] As the words *found sinners*, are here opposed to the being *justified*, they must mean sinners not justified; sinners left under the power and condemnation of sin.

Ibid. Is Christ the minister of sin?] To be the minister of sin, is to be the author of a dispensation, that leaves men under the guilt and punishment of it. Thus the law of Moses is said to be *the mini-*

stration

18 *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

But God forbid that this should be true. No. We are ourselves only to blame; for as I should condemn my own conduct, if I was to build again, what I had but a little before pulled down; so if I make the law necessary to justification, after having declared it unable to justify me, I thereby plainly make myself a transgressor of the law, by having renounced it for justification, and therefore am incapable of being justified by it.

19 *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

But this is not my case; for I am led by the law itself, which declares that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, to esteem myself as intirely discharged from the law as if I were in reality dead, that I may be accepted of God through faith, and lead a more excellent and spiritual life, than whilst I was in subjection to the law.

20 *I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet*

And as Christ died in order to make us partakers of that justification which the law cannot give, I as

stration of death and condemnation, because it shewed men the guilt of sin, and left them under the condemnation of death, 2 Cor. iii. 7. 4. and the apostle's argument here is this.

If though as Christians we seek to be justified by faith in Christ, yet we are under the condemnation of sin, then Christ is the minister of sin.

But we are under the condemnation of sin as Christians, if faith in Christ will not justify us. And therefore

Christ is the minister of sin.

This argument is strictly conclusive; and therefore, as the apostle rejects the inference, that Christ is the minister of sin, it follows, that faith in him is sufficient to our justification.

Ver. 18. This is a metaphor taken from unwise builders, who pull down and build up again without consideration, and thereby betray their own rashness and folly; and the argument stripped of the metaphor is plainly this:

If I make the law necessary to justification, after having renounced it for faith in Christ, as unable to justify me, then I am a transgressor of the law for having thus renounced it.

But to separate from the uncircumcised Christians, and compelling them by my example to be circumcised, is making the law necessary to justification, though as a Christian I have renounced it for faith in Christ.

Therefore I am a transgressor of it for having renounced it.

This argument also is strictly conclusive in reason, and needs only this short remark to clear it, viz. That what the apostles preached to the Jews themselves was this; That by faith in Christ they "might be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses;" of consequence the believing in Christ for such justification, was actually to own the law of Moses incapable of giving it them; since, had it not been so, they could not have had any need of any other method of justification.

Ver. 19. *I through the law am dead to the law.*] To be dead to the law of Moses, is to be under no more obligation to observe it, in point of justification, than if a person was actually dead: And the apostle tells us, he was thus dead to the Mosaic law, by that very law itself; because there were several passages in this law, which plainly evidenced a man could not be justified by it, and which clearly pointed out another method of justification: As where the law saith, "Curled is, &c." and again, "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" with many more that might be mentioned.

Ver. 20. *I am crucified with Christ.*] This is a figurative expression; the meaning is, That as Christ by his death on the cross abolished the law of commandments, or law of Moses, so far as to make the observing it no longer necessary to any person's being constituted a member of his church and kingdom; so no Christian can be under any farther obligation to observe it, but ought to look upon himself

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 *I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

I as his disciple am dead to the law, and no longer expect justification by it. Nevertheless I live, not as my former self when I was a Jew, but as one influenced by the gospel, spirit, and hope of Christ; for this is the great principle that both justifies and influences me, whilst I am in this world, viz. my faith in the Son of God, who so loved me as to give himself for me, and who hath thereby effectually restored me to the divine favour and acceptance.

And in thus doing I comply with the great design of the grace and mercy of God, in giving his Son to die as the propitiation for my sins; whereas I really throw contempt on this intention of the divine goodness, if I seek justification and pardon by the law of Moses; because if the law can so constitute sinners righteous as to secure their acceptance with God, the death of Christ for this purpose is altogether needless and in vain.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

I. We may observe, with respect to the dissimulation of Peter, that he did not dissemble the truth of the Christian doctrine by refusing to teach it, or by teaching any thing contrary to it, but merely by an imprudent and unguarded conduct; his fault lay, not in preaching the necessity of circumcision to justification, but in too cautiously withdrawing himself from the Gentile Christians, through fear of offending the Jewish converts, and giving them an occasion of renouncing Christianity; by which over caution only, and not by St. Peter's preaching, the Gentiles were apt to conclude and reason with themselves, that it was St. Peter's opinion that they ought to be circumcised. But this, it should be remembered, was only their inference, drawn from a prudential conduct of St. Peter's, though unreasonable in itself, and carried too far by this apostle.

II. That the pretence of the Romanists, that St. Peter was the prince of the self as crucified with Christ, dead to the law by his death, or as free from it as though he had actually been crucified and died with Christ.

Ibid. Nevertheless I live.] These expressions of *living, living in the flesh, and living to God*, all of them refer, if I judge right, to the point of justification; thus, at ver. 19. *I am dead to the law that I might live to God*, implies, 'that I might serve God with the zeal and cheerfulness of one justified by him through faith in Christ.' At ver. 20. *Nevertheless I live*, is, 'I am justified by God, and hereby restored to life and favour.' *Yet not I*, 'I do not live, I am not justified as a Jew: But Christ liveth in me; it is by faith in him that I am justified, and excited to diligence and constancy in my work, even by this firm belief and assurance of my heart, that he gave himself to death for me, to redeem me from the law, and raise me to the hope of eternal life.'

Ver. 21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God.]* The word ἀθετῶ, signifies to *reject* or *contemn*; and is thus several times rendered in our version. And this sense seems to be the best here, as it best suits the scope of the apostle's argument; because to enforce the observation of the law of Moses, as necessary to justification, was in fact to reject the Christian dispensation, and contemptuously to reproach it as incapable of granting to those who believed it, life and pardon; and in consequence of this, to make the death of Christ a very impertinent and needless thing, without either efficacy, or any valuable benefit attending it. *Then Christ is dead, ὥστε, in vain.*

apostles,

apostles, hath no foundation in scripture. For besides that James, and John, are equally stiled *pillars* with Peter, ver. 9. so here we find St. Paul publicly rebuking him, and charging him with a kind of dissimulation before the church at Antioch; which would have been very indecent in this apostle, had Peter been his superior and prince.

III. We may learn, that notwithstanding the apostles had the spirit of truth to lead them into all necessary knowledge, and to furnish them to preach Christ's gospel to the world; yet that in other cases they were subject to the errors of human nature. This is evident from this history of Peter, and the instruction from it is, - that humility becomes the greatest men, since they are liable to mistakes, and to be drawn into errors by ignorance, false prudence, fear, and other passions to which mankind as such are always more or less subject; and should teach us the necessity of *acknowledging God in all our ways, that he may direct our steps*; and of submitting quietly to reproof when deserved, and given in a becoming manner; and that we should regard no person's character or conduct in matters of religion, but solely the authority of God and Christ, and the plain uncorrupted truth of his gospel.

IV. The admission of the Gentiles into the church of God, by justifying them from their past sins upon their faith in Christ, is an act of free and absolute grace and mercy, and not owing to any precedent merit in them of virtue and good works; for God *quickeneth them*, i. e. raised them to the hope of eternal life when in a state of guilt, and under the condemnation of death; and by a parity of reason, when any habitual sinner under the gospel, respects, believes, and submits to the obedience of faith, his justification from his past sins, his recovery to the divine favour, and to the hopes of eternal life, is likewise an instance of undeserved mercy, and should be acknowledged to *the glory of the grace of God*.

V. That *Christ hath loved mankind, and given himself to death*, to redeem them from the bondage, curse and condemnation of the law, to bring them into the family and church of God, and to recover them to the hopes of eternal life, upon the reasonable conditions of unfeigned faith and new obedience; and that though the prescribing the observance of any rites or ceremonies, or any other condition besides the belief of the gospel, as necessary to church communion and the favour of God, is to despise the grace of God, and render the death of Christ as a vain thing; yet the expecting our final justification at the bar of God, from his goodness in accepting our imperfect obedience through Christ; in consequence and as the recompence of our holiness, good works, and new obedience, is both the duty and safety of a Christian, the most effectual acknowledgment of the merits of Christ's death, and the very best improvement a Christian can make of the grace of God. And

VI. That the belief of this truth, that *Christ loved us, and gave himself for us*, is the surest foundation on which we can build our hopes of pardon and justification, as well as the noblest spring of Christian piety, virtue, and usefulness. Christ's dying for us, is our best assurance of God's purposes of mercy towards us, and his willingness to bestow on us eternal life; and in proportion to the assurance we have of mercy and acceptance from God, such will be our encouragement to abound in the love and service of God. Since therefore every man, who hath this invaluable treasure of the gospel of God in his hands, may with boldness and as-

surance

urance say, *Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me*, let us imitate our great apostle's example; and in an humble dependance on the assistance of God, resolve, *The life that we will henceforth live in the flesh, shall be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.*

The apostle having, by a great variety of arguments vindicated his own apostleship and doctrine, and given the Galatians a short but clear account, of the method of justification; now comes to reason with them more directly on this important article, and to set before them the folly of departing from the simplicity of the Christian faith, and submitting to the bondage of the Jewish law for justification.

T E X T.

C H A P. III.

1 *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

2 *This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

3 *Are*

P A R A P H R A S E.

O foolish and senseless Galatians, what impostor by his arts and subtleties hath so bewitched you, that instead of obeying the truth of the gospel doctrine, ye should have recourse to the law of Moses for justification? Especially since the doctrine of Christ crucified hath been represented to you in the plainest and clearest manner.

Answer me as to this single article; Did you receive the Spirit in his extraordinary gifts, by your conformity to the law of Moses, or by hearing and obeying the gospel doctrine?

Unquestionably

Ver. 1. *Ανοήτοι. Foolish Galatians.*] The original word properly signifies 'persons void of consideration and understanding.' And it is with great justice here applied to the Galatians, since there could not be a greater instance and argument of want of thought and reflection, than for persons in their circumstances to forsake the doctrine of the apostles, and the purity of the Christian faith, and to suffer themselves to be led away by false seducers; to place their dependance on the unprofitable rites of the Jewish law for justification, and being constituted the members of the church of God.

Τις υμᾶς ἐβασίλευε. Who hath bewitched you.] *Βασίλευω*, signifies in the best writers 'to envy.' *φθονεῖς οὖτας, ὃ τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῖς βασίλευειν προαίρεται*, is the character of the Athenians, *Æl. V. H. l. ii. c. 13.* and thus it may signify here; 'who hath so envied you, or looked with so evil an eye on you, as to turn you away from the truth?' but as the word properly signifies to corrupt and deceive the eyes, and is frequently transferred to the mind, to denote the deception of it by evil arts; our translation seems to be just and proper. 'What impostor hath so bewitched you, as to persuade you to exchange the purity of the gospel for Jewish rites?' For this is the meaning of *not obeying the truth*, i. e. deserting the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith, and expecting it from the law of Moses.

Before whose eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified amongst you.] If this rendering should be judged best, the meaning is, that the death of Christ had been as clearly and plainly represented to them, in its certainty and effects, as if they had actually seen him crucified with their eyes; but the original will bear another translation, which I prefer; thus, 'before whose eyes Christ crucified hath been evidently set forth amongst you,' i. e. plainly and clearly preached amongst you. The expression, *καὶ ὁφθαλμοῖς*, *before whose eyes*, is used metaphorically by the best writers, to denote the clear discovery and perception of any thing. Thus *ἐν ὁφθαλμοῖς ὡρα τοῦ δεινῶν, malum quasi jam præsens videbat*, *Æl. iii. 26.* And thus Christ crucified was evidently set forth before the Galatians eyes; clearly represented to their minds, as though they had seen it, by the preaching of the apostle Paul; having thus rebuked them, he proceeds to argue with them.

Ver. 2. *By the Spirit*, the apostle here means, not what divines call the ordinary assistances of the

3 *Are ye so foolish, having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?*

4 *Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?*

5 *He*

Unquestionably by obeying the gospel doctrine. And can you, who have thus received the spirit of adoption, upon your first conversion, as the consequence of your faith in Christ, be so stupid as to imagine, that your justification is not compleat, unless you conform to the fleshly ceremonies of the law of Moses?

If this were true, all your past sufferings for the sake of Christianity must have been to no purpose, since you might have avoided them by submitting to circumcision and the law. And will you thus lose the benefit of all the persecutions you have endured, and render them wholly vain and ineffectual?

When

the Spirit, but those extraordinary gifts of God, which were frequently bestowed on the first converts, to assure them of their justification, and being constituted the children of God; which gifts are expressly called the Spirit or the Holy Ghost. Thus when Peter preached to Cornelius, "the Holy Ghost fell on those who heard him," Acts x. 44. for it is added, "they spoke with tongues, and magnified God," ver. 46. Thus at Ephesus, "the Holy Ghost came on the disciples, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied," Acts xix. 6. and when the apostles at the feast of Pentecost, were filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues, Peter expressly declares, "This is that which was spoken by Joel; I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh," Acts ii. 17.

Now these gifts of the Spirit were communicated as the full evidence and proof, that those who received them were constituted the people and children of God; thus the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius a Gentile; upon which the Jewish Christians made this reflection: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles—granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. Thus Peter at the council at Jerusalem, declares; "God bare the Gentiles witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them," Acts xv. 8. i. e. declaring the Gentiles equally members of the Christian church, and heirs to salvation by Christ with the Jews. Hence the Spirit in his extraordinary gifts, is called the spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. because the granting it was an instance of God's peculiar favour, and of his owning himself the Father and friend of those to whom he vouchsafed the Spirit.

Now in this view, the apostle's question appears with great propriety and strength. Did ye receive that spirit, which was the fullest evidence of your being justified, accepted, and received as the children and people of God, by conformity to the law of Moses, or by embracing the doctrine of the gospel? If by embracing the doctrine of the gospel, then you became justified by embracing that doctrine, and consequently need not conform to the law of Moses, in order to obtain justification. The argument in form is this.

Those who are justified by faith in Christ, need not conform to the law of Moses for justification; but Christians are justified by faith. Therefore, &c.

That Christians are justified by faith is thus proved.

Those who have received by faith that spirit from God, which is the great evidence of their justification, are justified by faith; but Christians have received. Therefore, &c.

This argument is strictly conclusive, and I would only observe with respect to the expression, *by the bearing of faith*, that *ακων* may be rendered 'obedience;' in which sense *ακω* is frequently used; thus, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him*, i. e. obey him, Matt. xvii. 5. So *Ælian*. V. H. l. iii. c. 16. and thus the expression will mean, 'by obedience to the gospel.' As the apostle knew that they received the spirit by obeying the gospel doctrine, he proceeds to other questions.

Ver. 3. *To begin in the Spirit*,] means their receiving the extraordinary gifts of it, immediately upon their believing in Christ, as the evidence of their justification and acceptance with God; and the *being made perfect in the flesh*, denotes, their having recourse to those ceremonies of the law of Moses, which reached only to the flesh, to perfect or compleat their justification; but this the apostle justly represents as a foolish imagination, and proceeds to tell them it was a reproach upon their former behaviour.

Ver. 4. The words, *εἴτε ὅτι εἰκν, if it be yet in vain*,] are a kind of genteel and tender recalling what he had said immediately before, and an expression of some hope that it might be otherwise. 'Have ye suffered so many things for Christ in vain, if you will finally render them vain, and not prevent it by a steady adherence to the purity of the gospel doctrine? I greatly fear for you, but am loth to give you up as wholly lost.'

5 *He therefore that mini-
streth to you the spirit, and
worketh miracles amongst you,
doth he it by the works of the
law, or by the hearing of
faith?*

6 *Even as Abraham be-
lieved God, and it was count-
ed to him for righteousness.*

When I was with you, and conferred the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit upon you, and wrought several miracles in the midst of you, did I confer and do them as a preacher of the necessity of the law of Moses to you, and to confirm your obligations to observe it; or as a preacher of the doctrine of justification by faith, and to confirm and establish you in the belief of it?

As a preacher of the doctrine of justification by faith. And thus Abraham himself, the father of our nation was justified; for when God promised him a numerous seed in his extreme old age, he believed in the Lord; and the scripture expressly says, it was counted to him for righteousness, Gen. xv. 6.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

To reconcile these Judaizing converts to this doctrine of justification by faith, the apostle with great address and strength shews them, that it was by this very principle of faith, that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation was himself justified. Abraham and Sarah were according to the course of nature, absolutely incapable of having any children. And upon his complaint to God that he was childless, God said to him; "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Abraham might have objected the natural impossibility of the thing, but he believed in the Lord, believed that God was able to give him a son, and would do it in accomplishment of his promise. What was the consequence of this? Why God counted to him this his belief of his promise, and trust in his power and goodness, for righteousness. God was so well pleased with this eminent instance of his faith and piety, that he accepted and blessed him as a truly righteous person; his very faith in the promise and power of God was his righteousness, that which justified him, and upon account of which God accepted and blessed him as a just person. This is the express doctrine of scripture, which cannot be evaded by the systems, schemes, and comments of fallible men, though it hath been often represented as erroneous and false; whilst the scriptures remain it will ever be true, that *Abraham believed God, and that it, this very belief in God, was accounted to him for righteousness.*

The expression of *imputing righteousness*, is but twice mentioned in scripture, and in neither place can it possibly signify the imputation of one person's righteou-

Ver. 5. Though St. Paul speaketh here in the third person, "he that minisreth to you the spirit," yet I think it is evident he means himself, who was the instrument of their conversion, and of conferring these extraordinary gifts upon them; and he appeals to them, that he conferred them only to establish the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not to bring them under bondage to the law of Moses; and this doctrine of justification by faith, he proceeds to shew was abundantly confirmed by the Old Testament, and that Abraham himself was thus justified.

Ver. 6. The word *ελογισθη*, rendered here *counted*, is translated in Rom. iv. 6. *imputed*. And from hence comes the expression of imputed righteousness; the word signifies to place somewhat to account, and that either as a matter of justice or favour, Rom. iv. 4. "To him that worketh is the reward not imputed of grace but of debt," in which the imputation of both kinds is expressly mentioned.

ness to another, so that he who is unrighteous in himself, should be esteemed and accepted as a just and righteous man for the sake of another person's righteousness; the imputation of righteousness never once means this in the New Testament. In the first place it evidently denotes the pardon of sin, Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. "David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,—and to whom the Lord will not impute sin:" In which passage nothing can be more evident, than that the imputing righteousness, the not imputing sin, and the forgiving iniquities, are equivalent expressions, and mean intirely the same thing, and they all of them denote justification; because not to impute sin is to pardon it, and to pardon sin is to impute righteousness, i. e. to esteem, and accept and treat the person pardoned as a righteous and just man that hath never offended.

The same expression of imputing righteousness is also used in the eleventh verse of the fourth to the Romans. "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also," i. e. 'that their faith might be imputed unto them for righteousness,' or, 'that they might be accepted and treated of God as righteous upon account, or for the sake of their faith:' That this is the meaning is plain from the apostle's reasoning, which is to shew that the uncircumcised Gentiles were to be justified the same way as Abraham was whilst he was uncircumcised. Now, says the apostle, "we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness," ver. 9. his faith was his righteousness, for which God accepted him as a just person even whilst he was uncircumcised, "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also," i. e. 'that they might be justified by faith as Abraham was.' Now this is good sense to say, that God, by imputing faith to Abraham whilst he was uncircumcised, shewed his purpose of imputing faith also to the believing uncircumcised Gentiles for their justification. But if the imputing righteousness means the imputing Christ's righteousness in this place, the apostle's discourse is incoherent, and proves nothing; for then the case will stand thus: Faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of believing uncircumcised Gentiles, that Christ's righteousness might be imputed to them. Now if Abraham was justified by faith, and the believing Gentiles are justified by Christ's righteousness, then they are justified two different ways; of consequence Abraham could not be their father, nor they his children.

But though I am not arguing against the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness for justification, and do not assert that such an expression is incapable of a good meaning, yet unquestionably this is not the sense of the passages I have been explaining; nor indeed is it ever once said in any single passage of the New Testament, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to any person: No; the expressions used by St. Paul are, "to impute righteousness," i. e. to pardon sin; and, more generally, "to impute faith for righteousness." Thus, "Abraham believed God, and it," his faith, "was imputed to him for righteousness;" and the reason of this the apostle gives in the next verse, or draws this inference from it.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture foreseeing, that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying: In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Since therefore Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, I would have you know, that they who imitate his faith, and believe the revelation and promises of God as he did, they are properly his children, and shall be accepted of God as he was.

And this is agreeable to the plain account of the Old Testament scriptures themselves, which prefigured that God would justify the uncircumcised believing Gentiles by faith, and taught Abraham that which is now the great doctrine of the gospel, in that remarkable expression: "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

From whence it is evident, that they only who imitate Abraham's faith, and believe the revelation and promises of God as he did, shall be justified as that faithful servant of God was, and obtain like him the divine blessing and acceptance.

The

Ver. 7. The apostle having proved at ver. 6. that God imputed Abraham's faith to him for righteousness, or accepted and blessed him as a just man, as the reward of his faith; asserts, in the next place, that they who are of faith, *οι εν πιστει*, that live by this principle of faith as Abraham did, they are the children of Abraham, i. e. looked upon, and esteemed by God as his genuine posterity, who were to be blessed as Abraham was; they resemble him as children do their parents, believing in God as he did, and influenced by faith as he was; and they obtain a like inheritance with him, being blessed, justified, and accepted of God, as the reward of their faith. As he was the first person declared publicly to be justified by faith, he stands as the head and father of the family of all good and pious men, that believe in God, and are accepted by him as the reward of their faith and piety; as they imitate his faith, they shall partake of his blessedness. And this is what the apostle tells us the scriptures foresaw, or God predicted by the scriptures, in that joyful news which God brought to Abraham himself, when he told him, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." The words *in thee* may signify either "because of thee," or "after thy example;" and in this sense the Hebrew particle *א*, is frequently used, to signify *according to*, or *even as*, or *with* any person. And this I take to be the true meaning of the passage, *All nations shall be blessed in thee*: "As I now bless thee as the reward of thy faith; so, in blessing thee, I pronounce a blessing on all nations of the earth, who shall at any time imitate thy faith; whereby thou shalt be looked on as the Father of all faithful pious men to the end of the world." And taking the words in this view, they are a prediction of the gospel state and method of justification, and a full proof of what the apostle asserts, that all nations should be justified by faith: nor is there any sense which appears so natural and obvious as this; since if God intended Abraham's blessing as a pattern after which all good men in all nations should be blessed, then they were literally blessed in and with him: And thus the apostle's inference is undeniably true, That since God promised that all nations should be blessed in and with and after the pattern of Abraham, they that live by faith shall be blessed with faithful Abraham; their faith shall be imputed for righteousness as his was, and God will accept and bless them as the reward of their faith, as he did him. The whole of the apostle's reasoning in this part of the chapter may be summed up in these two arguments:

'If the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were vouchsafed as the evidence of the Gentiles adoption and justification, were conferred on them upon their embracing the doctrine of the gospel preached to them, without conforming to the law of Moses, then are men justified by faith, and not by the law.'

'But the gifts of the Spirit were conferred on them, &c. Therefore, &c.'

The other argument is this:

The PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS are these.

1. That to expect justification, i. e. pardon and acceptance with God, upon account of any external ceremonial observances whatsoever, or upon any other foundation, but that of a sincere belief of, and obedience to, the gospel of Christ; is a departure from the truth of Christianity, and an argument of very great folly. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" ver. 1. You see the whole of the apostle's argument is levelled against the law of Moses, and to shew that men could not be justified by it, but by the obedience of faith only; and indeed there is no doctrine more subversive of the gospel of Christ, than that which teaches men to expect justification by rites and ceremonies, and external characters and privileges, or indeed by any other way, but that of a sincere operative faith in Christ, or belief of his gospel.

2. That it is one great office of the gospel ministry to set forth "Christ crucified" to their hearers, to explain the end and reasons of his death, and to persuade them to become reconciled to God by a firm and hearty belief of his gospel, or of the promises of God through him.

3. That justification, according to St. Paul's doctrine, consists not in the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which this apostle never once mentions, but in the imputation of a Christian's own faith to him for righteousness. Let me not be mistaken, as though I asserted that the righteousness, i. e. the perfect obedience of Christ to the death, was of no use to a Christian in his justification. I know, and I believe, that Christ was delivered for our offences, and that his death and intercession could have been of no avail to us, unless his obedience had been perfect; and that as he was constituted a Saviour, as the reward of his obedience to death, our salvation by him is strictly the effect and fruit of his obedience; so that our justification is owing to the merits of his righteousness, i. e. the effect and benefit of that righteousness, by which he became worthy and fit to be constituted the Saviour of the world: But then this I plainly assert,

That Christ's righteousness is never once in the New Testament said to be imputed to any person whatsoever, for justification: And also,

That faith, or the sincere belief of the gospel, is again and again said to be imputed for righteousness, i. e. reckoned to believers as that for which they are accepted and blessed of God, as just and righteous persons. I desire not to be believed on my own word; I have for this an authority greater than all the catechisms, creeds, systems, and confessions, that have ever been made since the apostle's days. The sacred historian says of Abraham, *he believed in the Lord, and it, that belief, was imputed to him for righteousness*, Gen. xv. 6. St. Paul to the Romans quotes this very passage, and argues from it as a settled principle. He farther says, in the most general terms, *to him that believeth on him that justifieth*

'In the same manner that Abraham, the father of the faithful, was justified, all the faithful, his children, must be justified.'

'But Abraham was justified by faith in Christ only, and not by the law of Moses: Therefore his children must be justified by faith only.' The reason why all good men must be justified as Abraham was, is, because God blessed all nations in him, declaring him hereby to be the pattern of their justification and blessedness.

The conclusiveness of these arguments speak for themselves, and need no farther illustration.

the ungodly, his faith is counted [it should be rendered imputed] for righteousness, Rom. iv. 5. Again, we say faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, Rom. iv. 9. Again; now it was not written for his sake alone, that faith was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Rom. iv. 23, 24. I appeal to any man, who is not under incurable prejudices, whether it is not the express literal doctrine of scripture, that a Christian's faith is that which God imputes to him as his righteousness, that which is his proper righteousness under the gospel; that for which God pardons his past sins, justifies or accepts him as a just person, and gives him a right to the benefits of salvation, and for which through Christ he will finally reward him, if he perseveres in it to the end of life, purifies his heart under the influence of it, and makes it perfect by a course of good works. I say not this, willingly to offend any man, but to discharge a good conscience, and I trust in the fear of God; but whether I please or displease men, I hope I shall always boldly speak what I apprehend to be the truth of Christ; and if it be unsound and erroneous doctrine to say, that a sincere faith producing all the fruits of goodness, is the true righteousness of a Christian, and accepted and rewarded of God as such: I have nevertheless the pleasure to know, that I err with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and had rather do so, than in opposition to his scheme, be applauded for orthodoxy and soundness, by any set or parties of men in the whole world.

The two arguments which St. Paul makes use of in the foregoing part of this chapter, to prove that men are to be justified, i. e. pardoned, and accepted of God, by their belief of, and obedience to Christianity, without any regard to the law of Moses, or necessity of complying with it, are these.

1. That they received that Spirit, which is the great evidence of their adoption, being made the people of God, and the heirs of salvation, solely as the consequence of their becoming Christians, and not upon the account of their conformity to the law of Moses; and that therefore it was absurd to imagine, that the law, which had no share in conferring the spirit of adoption upon them, could contribute any thing to their justification, or render their acceptance with God more perfect and secure, than the belief of Christianity, which was attended with this undeniable evidence of their being justified, pardoned, and accepted.

2. That Abraham, the founder and father of their nation, and friend of God, had his faith in God imputed to him for righteousness, or was accepted and treated of God as a righteous and good man, for the sake of his faith in the power, goodness, and promises of God, without any conformity to those ceremonies which were afterwards enjoined by the law of Moses; and that therefore the Jews had no reason to except against the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, as a strange or novel doctrine, since it was as ancient as the first founder of the Jewish nation, and the very method by which Abraham, in whom they boasted, was himself justified and accepted.

In the tenth verse, he adds another reason, taken from the constitution of the law itself.

T E X T.

T E X T.

10. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written: Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

11 *But that no man is justified by the law, in the sight of God, is evident; for The just shall live by faith.*

12 *And [But] the law is not of faith. But the man that*

P A R A P H R A S E.

And that men must be justified by faith, as Abraham was, and cannot be justified by the law of Moses, is evident from hence; that this law leaves all who are under it, and depend upon it, and who in any instance violate it, subject to a curse; according to that declaration of God by Moses, Deut. xxvii. 26. *Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them.*

And that God never intended, that any man should be accepted and blessed of him, upon account of his observance of the ceremonial law of Moses, is farther certain from that declaration of his by an inspired prophet under the law, Habak. ii. 4. *The just shall live by his faith.*

If this be true that God accepts good men as the reward of their faith, it is impossible the law can contribute

Ver. 10. With respect to this passage of scripture, which the apostle cites from Deuteronomy, it may be observed, that though the translation in Deuteronomy, *he that confirmeth not*, be different from the rendering in Galatians, *he that continueth not*, yet that the rendering should be in both places the same, and that the Greek word *εμμενει* used by St. Paul, doth truly and properly express the meaning of the original Hebrew *ד'ק'י*, which signifies *to continue* and persevere in any thing; and thus the Hebrew word is rendered by our translators, 1 Sam. xiii. 14. *but now thy kingdom ד'ק'י shall not continue.* And the Septuagint version hath rendered this very passage quoted by the apostle by the same word, which he hath made use of.

I would farther observe, that though the word ALL, he “that continueth not in all things,” is not in the passage in Deuteronomy; yet that it is justly supplied by the apostle, and was the plain sense of Moses; for in the first verse of the chapter, Moses expressly says, *keep all the commandments which I command you this day.* And after he had reckoned up several of the most capital crimes, and pronounced a curse upon the doers of them, he pronounceth a curse of a more extensive nature; *cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law*, i. e. all the words or precepts of the law of Moses, as you have it expressly in the eighth verse; and as farther appears by the blessings pronounced in the following chapter, verse 1. where it is said, *if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, all these blessings shall come on thee.* If then the blessings were confined to those, who observed all God’s commandments, the curse must be entailed on all those, who should not continue in all the words of the law to do them.

The strength and conclusiveness of the apostle’s arguments will be immediately discerned on reflecting, that the question before us is; How a sinner can be secured of pardon, and restored to full favour. The apostle asserts that this could not be by virtue of any provision of the law of Moses, because that law pronounces every transgressor of it accursed. The argument in form is this:

That law, which subjects to a curse every sinner who in a single instance breaks it, cannot justify, or absolve that sinner from his guilt:

But the law of Moses subjects to a curse every sinner who in a single instance breaks it; And Therefore the law of Moses cannot justify and absolve him.

Ver. 11. *The just shall live by faith.*] To explain this argument, the prophecy itself must be a little opened, Habak. ii. 3. The prophet tells the Jews, *though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry*; or, as St. Paul much better renders it, *he that cometh will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 37. So that the message which God orders the prophet to reveal, and write in such legible characters, as that he who ran might read it, was that the Jews should believe and wait for the accomplishment of God’s promises, and place their hope and trust in the power and goodness and faithfulness of God. After which he adds, *behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him*; of which I think there are scarcely two words rightly translated. St. Paul hath done justice to the passage,

that doth them shall live in them.

contribute any thing to their acceptance. Since the law of Moses is not by faith, never speaks of justification by faith, but places it upon quite another foundation, upon a sinless perfect obedience to all the precepts of it; this appears from the law of Moses itself, which declares, Levit. xviii. 5. *Ye shall keep my statutes, and my judgments, which if a man do he shall live in them*; and by consequence it leaves every man under a curse, who in a single instance disobeys it.

13 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being*

Now from this curse of the law of Moses, Christ hath redeemed us, by establishing with us a new and better

sage, and rightly rendered it thus, *if any man draws back*, i. e. deserts through impatience this his hope and trust in God's promise; *his, or my soul*, that is God, *shall have no pleasure in him*, i. e. shall neither approve nor accept him, Heb. x. 37. and then follows what St. Paul cites in this his epistle to the Galatians; *the just shall live by his faith*. As *living* is here opposed to God's *having no pleasure* in any person, it must mean, that he should so live as to be approved and accepted of God. And as *faith* stands in opposition to *drawing back*, it signifies, a firm and unshaken trust in and belief of the revelation and promise of God. And the meaning of the whole expression will be this; That the faith of a good man is so very pleasing to God, as that he will not fail to bless him on the account of it. Now how beautifully and justly is this applied by St. Paul, and how strongly doth it confirm his argument! says he to the Galatians, 'This doctrine, of the necessity of your being circumcised, and conforming to the law of Moses for justification, cannot be true; because God himself declared to the very Jews, who were under the law, that all just men should live, i. e. be accepted and blessed upon the account, and as the reward of their faith in him; and of consequence the doctrine that I preach to you, that you must be justified and accepted of God only by faith in him, is the very doctrine taught by one of God's inspired prophets, even to those who were actually under the law.' The argument in form is this:

If God himself hath declared that good men in general shall be justified and accepted for their faith, the observance of the law of Moses cannot be necessary to their justification and acceptance.

But God hath declared by the prophet Habakkuk, that good men in general shall be justified and accepted for their faith.

Therefore the observance of the law of Moses cannot be, &c. No man can apply scripture more pertinently than this apostle, nor with more strength and advantage to his argument.

Ver. 13. The passage cited by St. Paul from Deut. xxi. 23. runs in the Hebrew thus, *he that is hung is the curse of God*; the apostle adds *on a tree*, with great justice from the former part of the verse. *His body shall not remain all night upon the tree*; and though he leaves out the words, *of God*, the curse, or accursed of God, yet it doth not in the least alter the sense of the original passage. But it is more material to inquire,

In what sense Christ is said to be made *a curse for us*, and how by this we are delivered from the curse of the law. Some there are, (Ber. in Loc.) who scruple not to affirm, that God properly and without a figure cursed Christ in our flesh, and poured out upon him all his wrath. But I think there can be no foundation for this crude opinion: It is certain, that Christ's obedience to his heavenly Father, in submitting to the death of the cross, was highly pleasing and acceptable, since it was the last and strongest proof that he could give of his filial affection and duty; and of consequence Christ could not in any sense be accursed of his Father, in or upon account of that death, which was the most acceptable, because the noblest instance of his submission to his will. The apostle himself furnishes us with the true reason of the expression of Christ's being made a curse, in that passage which he cites from Deuteronomy. For having said, that *Christ was made a curse for us*, he adds, for it is written, *Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree*. His being hanged on a tree, was therefore the true reason of his being made a curse. It was an accursed death, to which none but persons who were criminal in the highest degree, and who therefore deserved to be accursed of God and man, were exposed. Now in this sense the innocent Jesus was made a curse by God, as his heavenly Father permitted him to die that ignominious death, which the law of Moses pronounced accursed.

being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree, Deut. xxi. 23.

14 *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

15 *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.*

16 *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.*

better covenant, and thereby intirely vacating the Mosaic law, by willingly yielding himself up to an accursed death, even the death of the cross. For thus the law itself pronounces it, *Cursed is every one, who hangeth on a tree.*

That thus, upon the abolition of the law of Moses, the Gentiles, on their believing in Christ, might partake of Abraham's blessedness, by being justified and accepted of God through faith, as Abraham was; and might thereupon receive as his children, that spirit which God promised, to bear witness to the truth and certainty of their adoption.

This argument may be illustrated, brethren, by the common practice of mankind. A compact, for instance, or agreement between man and man, after it is once confirmed, stands good, and is not liable to be vacated or altered by any other person.

In like manner the original covenant made by God with Abraham cannot be vacated, the peculiar promise

curse, and which was inflicted only on the vilest and most accursed malefactors. And in this view the apostle's citation is pertinent.

But how are we delivered from the curse of the law, by Christ's being made a curse, or dying an accursed death? Why plainly thus; as he hereby put an end to the obligation of the Jewish law, which pronounced a curse on every one, who did not in all things continue to observe it; by introducing and establishing a better covenant into the world, even that covenant which God made with Abraham, of which this was the principal article, that faith should be imputed to him for righteousness. If the Jewish law was obligatory upon Christians, then Christians would be liable to the same curse upon every failure of obedience to it, as the Jews were; and by consequence we can be no otherwise delivered from this curse, but by the abrogation of that law of Moses which contained it; nor could the obligation of this law ever be abrogated, but by the introduction of another that was to supercede it. This new covenant was introduced by Christ, and the truth of it solemnly ratified by his death; since he died to bear testimony to the truths he taught, and sealed them with his blood; and since God bare him witness that his testimony was true, by raising him up from the dead, and delivering him from the curse of the tree on which he hung, and exalting him to be a Prince and a Saviour, that we might receive from him the adoption of children, and the Holy Spirit, in those miraculous gifts of it, which was the grand evidence of this adoption. For thus it follows:

Ver. 14. *The blessing of Abraham, was evidently his justification and acceptance with God through faith; this God imputed to him for righteousness, and signally rewarded and blessed him upon account of it. And therefore the coming of Abraham's blessings on the Gentiles, is their being justified and accepted of God, upon the same principle of faith as he was; the evidence of this was the gift of the Spirit, as the apostle tells us, Gal. iv. 6. because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

Ver. 16. This verse hath a great appearance of obscurity, insomuch that St. Jerom ventures to say, that St. Paul made use of a false argument, which, though it might do well enough with the stupid Galatians, yet would not be approved by any wise or learned men. And Mr. Le Clerc seems to have been of the same opinion, who says it is an allegorical kind of argument, which the apostle made use of for the conviction of the Jews, who were used to such methods of reasoning: But these suppositions are injurious to St. Paul's character as an inspired person and good reasoner; and it is I apprehend so far from being true that St. Paul's argument here is false or allegorical, that, if I am not mistaken, it is as beautiful and strong a passage, as any in this whole epistle, though I confess

made. He saith not, *And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

promise of which related to him and to his seed. And here there is this circumstance, which deserves to be peculiarly taken notice of; that though Abraham had many children by several wives, and therefore very different seeds or families, yet the original promise, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, runs in the singular number, *in thy seed*, to denote one person as principally intended, which one person is the Messiah or Christ; and not in the plural number, *in thy seeds shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, as though all Abraham's posterity were intended to be blessings to the whole world.

17 And

Since

fess that none of the commentaries that I have seen, have given me much satisfaction on this head. To clear up this seemingly obscure passage, observe:

1. That the promise which the apostle here refers to, was that which he mentions, ver. 8. *In thee shall all nations be blessed.* This was the gospel, preached even to Abraham, when God ordered him to leave his country and family, Gen. xii. 3. It was afterwards renewed to him by the angel that came down to punish Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. xiii. 18. Now the apostle tells us, that this reiterated promise, or these several promises were given not only to Abraham but to his seed; and this the history verifies. For after Abraham had intentionally offered up his son Isaac, God said to him, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. so that the promise first given to Abraham was now extended to his seed.

After this observation the apostle proceeds to argue, that *he says not to seeds as of many, but to thy seed as of one*, i. e. when God gave this promise to Abraham, he confined it to a single person, inasmuch as the promise ran, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*; and did not extend it to all Abraham's seed, or every one of his children, by saying, *in thy seeds*, in the plural number, *shall all nations be blessed*. Now though, as critics remark, the Hebrew word ער is never used in the plural number, yet that the observation is just and pertinent, will appear to any one who observes, that Abraham is said in scripture to have several seeds, because he had several sons by several wives, besides Isaac the son of the promise by Sarah. Let the scripture determine: God says of Ismael, the son of the bond woman, of him *will I make a nation, because he is thy seed*, i. e. in the singular number, thy son. And yet, in the verse immediately foregoing, God says to Abraham; *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*, Gen. xxi. 12, 13. Ismael and Isaac therefore were equally Abraham's seed or sons; and of consequence if the promise, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, had referred to both Ismael and Isaac; it must have ran in the plural number, either *in thy seeds*, or which is the same thing, *in thy sons*, shall all nations be blessed. But notwithstanding Ismael was properly Abraham's seed, yet God excluded him from being accounted or esteemed such, declaring, *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*; and by consequence the promise, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, could refer to, and be understood of no other of the seeds of Abraham but Isaac only. So that what the apostle intends to prove, he effectually makes out, that this promise, *in thy seed all nations shall be blessed*, related only to a single person or son of Abraham, exclusive of all his other posterity.

The apostle adds, *which is Christ.* Ος εστΙ Χριστος.] The pronoun being masculine, must agree with ενος, *one*; and not with σπέρμα, *seed*; and should be rendered, *which one person, is Christ*; or, as I would rather render the word, *Messiah*. For thus some of the Jewish commentators justify St. Paul's application; who in their comment on Gen. xxii. 18. say, *thy seed*, that is, *the king Messiah*. It may be here said, that as I have shewn the words, *thy seed*, refer to Isaac exclusive of Ismael, they can belong to the Messiah only in a secondary or allegorical sense; to which I answer, that the contrary is absolutely certain, and that the promise primarily and solely belongs to the Messiah. And to clear this, observe, that the promise, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, was after the declaration, that in Isaac should Abraham's seed be called. Of consequence whatever was promised to Abraham's seed after this, was promised either to Isaac himself, or to all Abraham's posterity by Isaac, or to some one principal person of Isaac's posterity; and which of these is intended, the nature of such promise must determine. Now all nations of the earth were never blessed in Isaac personally, nor in any of his posterity as a body; and therefore this promise must refer to that single person in whom alone it was accomplished, to that single person, of whom alone it was prophesied,

17 *And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

Since therefore the promise, *in thy seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed*, refers to the Messiah, and since this promise was confirmed by God himself to Abraham, four hundred and thirty years before the law of Moses was given to the Jews; it is impossible that the law of Moses, which was so long after the solemn promise to Abraham, can so vacate or disannul this promise, as to make it of none effect; since Abraham and his seed had a real claim from the fidelity of God, to insist on the performance of it.

The phesied, *That he should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*; to that very Jesus of Nazareth, who preached peace to them who were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh, making both Jews and Gentiles fellow-citizens, and of the household of God. So that this promise was literally confined to Abraham's one seed by Isaac, and this one is the Messiah, and this Messiah is our Christ, the Son of the living God; which is the thing St. Paul asserts, and which he hath solidly proved from the history, and the very nature of the promise itself; now the use he makes of this assertion or observation follows in the very next verse.

Ver. 17. To clear up this consequence I need only observe, That the original promise to Abraham was; *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. Abraham's blessing was, that he was justified by faith, i. e. was esteemed, accepted, and rewarded of God as a just and righteous person for his piety towards God, in his firm and stedfast belief of, and obedience, to his promises, Gen. xv. 6. If then when God thus blessed Abraham, he blessed all nations in him, or pronounced a blessing on him, that was to extend to pious men in all nations; it follows, that when the terms of this promise were altered, to, *In thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, the nature of the blessing itself could not be altered; because this would have disannulled God's original covenant with Abraham. And therefore the true meaning of the promise to Abraham's seed was, *In thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, i. e. the Messiah, who is to proceed from thee, shall make all nations, who will believe in him, partakers of thy blessedness, by constituting them the people and children of God, and restoring them to the divine acceptance, and the hope of eternal life, upon the very foundation that thou thy self wast justified and accepted, viz. upon the principle of faith, or a firm belief of that revelation and those promises, which he shall deliver to the world in my name, and by my authority.

So that God constitutes a covenant with Abraham and his seed, that pious men who believe in God, should be justified and accepted upon account of their piety and faith. Of consequence Abraham and his seed had a claim from the justice and fidelity of God, to the performance of this promise; who, to speak with reverence, could not be released from it, without the consent of Abraham and his seed, who were principal contracting parties with God in this covenant. And by consequence farther, no subsequent engagement of God with any of Abraham's posterity, could make void this prior covenant of God with Abraham, and his one seed. And therefore the law of Moses, which was four hundred and thirty years after this promise, could not cancel or disannul it. And by consequence, once more, the observation of the law of Moses can never be necessary to the justification of the families and nations of the earth; since it was the very covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, that their faith should be imputed to them for righteousness, as Abraham's was; or that God would accept and bless and reward them, upon account of a sincere and lively belief of his revelation and promises, even as he accepted and rewarded Abraham himself: This, I think, is the apostle's argument; and I apprehend it will be found upon examination, to be so far from being an abusive, allegorical, inconclusive way of argument, that it amounts to a strict and proper demonstration; and invincibly proves, what the apostle intended it should prove, That faith in Christ was sufficient to justify the Gentile Christians, without any conformity to the law of Moses.

I have only one thing more to observe, that the words *εἰς Χριστὸν* in this verse, should not be rendered, as we have it in our bibles, *The covenant confirmed before of God in Christ*, but *the covenant confirmed before of God concerning, or in reference to the Messiah*. Thus Grotius explains it by pertinens

The DOCTRINAL and PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS from this portion of Scripture, are such as these.

I. That the law of Moses was never intended of God, to justify or save men from the moral guilt of sin; it commanded an intire obedience to all the precepts of it, and pronounced a curse upon all who willingly transgressed it. It enjoined indeed offerings and sacrifices to absolve men from their political or civil guilt; but none of them extended farther than this, and could never reach to make the sinner perfect before God, or to procure his absolution at the divine tribunal. And this appears, in that persons were pronounced by God accursed if they committed several faults, which either the law of Moses never punished, or which might be expiated by a sacrifice or fine. Thus the man who set light by his father or mother, that removed his neighbour's landmark, that made the blind to wander out of the way, or that perverted the judgment of the stranger, fatherless and widow, is solemnly pronounced accursed, Deut. xxvii. 16, 19. tho' I do not find that the law provided any extreme punishment, but only commutations and fines, and sacrifices, upon account of them; so that these and other the like transgressions, though pardonable as committed against the Jewish state, yet retained their moral guilt and obligation before God, and were not to be expiated by fines and sacrifices, nor any other way but by the Christian method, of a true repentance and sincere reformation.

II. That there is only one genuine method, a method as ancient as the oldest of God's dispensations, by which sinners can be justified, pardoned, and accepted, and that is returning to God, living under the impressions of his being and attributes, believing in and depending on his promises, and under the influence of this divine principle of faith, yielding an uniform and steady obedience to his command. This faith was Abraham's righteousness, that for which God accepted him as a righteous man, and by continuing in which, and living suitable to its influence, he continued a righteous man, and was finally accepted of God as such; and that all believers, amongst all families and nations of the earth, should be justified upon the same foundation, is the great article of St. Paul's gospel; and what is more, the essential article of that covenant, which God made with Abraham, and in Abraham's peculiar seed and glory, the promised Messiah. So that in Christianity circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but faith which works by love. To believe the gospel as a revelation from God, and to obey it in consequence of our believing, is the righteousness of a Christian man, by which he is made a child of God, and for which through Christ, he shall be hereafter accepted as an heir of salvation. Men may boast of the shadowy righteousness of forms and ceremonies, and pride themselves in the splendid robes of another righteousness; but unless they have this righteousness of faith, that solid righteousness which consists in an uniform life of piety and virtue, and

ad Christum, relating to Christ; and thus the preposition *εις* is used by the best Greek authors.

Thus *αρμονια εις Απολλωνα* is *harmonia quæ refert ad Apollinem, vel in laudem Apollinis*, Ælian. V. H. l. 13. c. 21. Thus Plutarch. de musica, *init. τομος αυλητικος εις Απολλωνα*, is *lex tibicinalis pertinens ad Apollinem*. Et alibi.

And thus the apostle's argument will be clear, and I think liable to no objection.

which proceeds from faith in God and his promises, as its principle and foundation, even Christ himself shall profit them nothing. But if clothed with this righteousness of faith they are sure of Abraham's blessing, of pardon and acceptance with God to eternal life; it is a righteousness which may safely be depended on, since it is the very righteousness that God covenanted with Abraham his seed should introduce, and which therefore must take place under him; a righteousness everlasting in it self, and as the nature of things even render it, which God necessarily and therefore immutably approves; and which therefore, according to the terms of the Abrahamic covenant, will justify all who are partakers of it amongst all nations, and even to the end of time.

III. Christ is so only made a curse for men, as he died that manner of death to which accursed persons were generally exposed, and which was pronounced accursed by Moses his law.

IV. Christ by dying this accursed death, sealed the truth of his own doctrine by his blood; and by thus confirming his gospel, and the promises he made in the name of God, he became the author of a new and better covenant, and thereby redeemed all mankind from their obligations to observe that covenant of Moses, which declared, "Curled is every one who confirmeth not, &c."

V. God is ever faithful to and mindful of his promises, and covenant engagements with mankind.

The apostle having in the foregoing verses argued, and clearly shewn, that the great promise, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, referred to the Messiah; and by consequence that this promise could not be annulled by the law of Moses, which was given four hundred and thirty years after it; draws the proper inference at ver. 18. to which all his reasoning tended, viz. that justification, righteousness, and acceptance with God, could not be by the observation of the law of Moses.

T E X T.

18 *For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: But God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

19 *Wherefore*

P A R A P H R A S E.

But if justification be the effect of the observation of the law of Moses, this antecedent promise to Abraham must become of no effect; because, if the blessedness to be inherited, which is justification and righte-

Ver. 18. *Κληρονομία. The inheritance.*] The apostle means that blessedness which was entailed on Abraham and on his seed, or which God promised to Abraham, and to all the families of the earth through his seed, which was the blessedness of being justified by faith; and we may observe with what care and exactness the apostle useth this word: An inheritance is what comes by descent and birthright, and therefore before ever the apostle useth this word, he solidly proves that the blessedness spoken of was entailed on Abraham's seed, who therefore had a right through the Messiah to claim it as their inheritance. And the apostle's inference from his premises is strictly conclusive; since nothing is more evident, than that the law of Moses must have vacated the promise to Abraham, though given four hundred and thirty years after it, if the observation of that law had been necessary to justification; because then justification must have been the consequence of obedience to this ceremonial law, and this would have been contrary to God's promise to Abraham, by which justification was annexed to and made the reward of faith; for God gave it to Abraham by promise.

righteousness, is to be obtained by a conformity to the Mosaic law; it is impossible it can be in consequence of the promise, which was, that all nations should be blessed by the Messiah his seed, after the manner of Abraham, by being justified by faith even as he was. For this was the inheritance God freely promised to Abraham and his seed.

19 *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because* What then? What will the consequence of this be? Why, that the law was so far from being given with

Ibid. *Κεχαρισται*. Freely, and voluntarily gave it; not annexed it by way of debt due to the merit of obedience to a ceremonial law: And in this sense the original word *χαρίζομαι*, is used by the best authors, *Ælian*. V. H. l. 9. c. 2. *Προθυμότερον* [Hieronem] *φασιν αὐτὸν χαρίζεσθαι, εἰς τὰς αὐτὰς λαμβάνειν*.

Ver. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law?* The word *serveth* is not in the original, and I think the rendering not very exact. I would therefore put the interrogation before the word *law*. *Τί οὖν; What then?* What will follow from hence, that justification cannot be by the law? Why that the law was given upon account of transgressions. And to this purpose the word *Τί* is frequently used by St. Paul, See *Rom.* iii. 3. iv. 1. and vi. 15. and elsewhere.

Ibid. *The law was added because of transgressions.* Many expositors explain this, as though the reason of God's giving the law to the Jews was their transgressions, in making and worshipping the golden calf: But this doth not appear to me to be quite the truth, since a good part of the ceremonial law seems to have been given before this transgression, viz. whilst Moses continued forty days with God upon the mount; as any one may see, who will consult the history, as related, *Exod.* xxiv—xxxii chapters. The true way of understanding St. Paul's meaning, is to consult St. Paul himself, who hath fully explained this matter, "how the law was given upon account of transgressions."

It was given to discover to the Jews what things were offensive to God, and would render them guilty in the sight of God. Thus he argues, *Rom.* iii. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of sin*, as it points out the great things which are offensive to God, and forbids them by the severest penalties. To the same purpose he says, chap. vii. 7. *I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known concupiscence to be a sin, unless the law had said, thou shalt not covet*, (See also chap. v. ver. 20.) i. e. men would not have understood that the inward passions, and affections, and inclinations after unsuitable objects, had been evil and offensive to God, unless they had been forbidden by his law. So that the law of Moses was given because of transgressions, as it was designed to settle the boundaries between moral good and evil, virtue and vice; and to guard men against those transgressions, which were offensive to God.

And therefore the law was farther given upon account of transgressions, as it ordained the severest punishments against all offenders, and pronounced them accursed. Thus the apostle, *The law worketh wrath*; it annexes a penalty to every transgression, and subjects the criminal to wrath and vengeance, *Rom.* iv. 15. Hence he farther argues, *Without the law sin was dead. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death*, *Rom.* vii. 8, 9, 10. When I considered the nature of the law, and my own transgressions against it, and the penalties denounced as the just recompence of it, I found myself dead, i. e. under the condemnation of death, and liable to the just displeasure of God. It is upon this account that this apostle tells the Corinthians, *The strength of sin is the law*; that which shews its offensiveness to God, and gives it the power of condemnation and death, *1 Cor.* xv. 56. So that it is evident from St. Paul himself, that the law of Moses was given upon account of transgressions, as the great design of it was to point out to the Jews the crimes and vices which were offensive to God, and to preserve that people, who were naturally prone to run into the worst transgressions, from the commission of those sins, by annexing the severest punishments to the doers of them. The apostle adds:

That this law was added, only to last till the seed should come to whom it was promised, that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him. An observation exceedingly pertinent and just; because if the law of Moses had been designed to have been of longer continuance, the promise to Abraham's seed or the Messiah must have been frustrated, since it is impossible in the nature of things,

cause of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels, in the hand of a Mediator.

with a design to justify all men, that it was added only to the Jews upon account of their transgressions, and to shew the real displeasure of God against sin, by the punishments annexed to it; and by consequence it could never be intended by God to continue longer, than that time when Abraham's seed should come, in whom the promise, that all families of the earth should be blessed, was to take place. And this appears from the manner in which the law of Moses was given, viz. commanded by angels as the ministers of God, and delivered by the interposition of Moses, the Mediator between God and them.

20 Now a Mediator is not a Mediator of one. But God is one.

Now as the notion of a Mediator implies not one party only with whom he is to transact, nor two parties mutually one by agreement and friendship, this

21 Is

things, that the promise of a believing sinner's justification by faith could take place; if that law, which put all transgressors under a curse, had been of perpetual obligation and force. Farther,

Ibid. The law of Moses was διαταγεις δι' αγγελων, ordained by angels, i. e. commanded by the ministry of angels, or, as the author to the Hebrews ii. 2. expresses it, was spoken by angels. This Moses himself intimates, Deut. xxxiii. 2. where he describes God on mount Sinai with ten thousand of his holy ones, or angels; which is confirmed by David, Psal. lxxviii. 17. Now that terrible majesty with which God delivered his law, occasioned by the awful appearances of his angels; and the thunders and lightnings and voices which were effected by their ministry, sufficiently prove that the law was given upon account of transgressions; or as Moses said, God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not, Exod. xx. 20. To terrify them from sin by this appearance of God, and teach them what to expect from so awful a Majesty, if they wilfully offended him.

The same truth appears, in that it was given by the hand of a Mediator, viz. Moses, and that at the people's request. For when they saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they stood afar off; and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: But let not God speak to us lest we die, Exod. xx. 18, 19. The Jews were extremely prone to sin, and therefore God appeared in all the terrors of an offended Majesty, to impress their minds with awe, and treated with them at a distance, by the interposition of a Mediator. Now,

Ver. 20. A Mediator is not a Mediator of one.] i. e. it necessarily supposes two parties, and two parties at variance; it being the proper work of a Mediator to compromise their differences, and settle the terms of agreement and peace between them. Thus Moses received his message from God to the people, and then returned back the people's answer to God, and delivered to them that covenant which was to be the measure of their obedience, and the charter of their privileges, See Exod. xix. 3—8. A plain demonstration that the law was delivered upon account of the transgressions of the people, and to restrain them from such transgressions for the future, by threatening the severest punishments to those who disobeyed it.

Ibid. But God is one.] These words are evidently added by way of antithesis, or opposition to what went immediately before; and I think to point out the different reasons of God's giving the promise to Abraham, and the law to the Jews, from the quite different manner of their delivery. The law was given because of transgression, as appears by its being delivered in a terrible manner by the ministry of angels, and the hands of a Mediator. But God, who gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise, is one, the only party concerned in the delivery of it; he gave it himself, without the ministry of angels or Mediator; and by consequence not upon account of transgressions, but as a token of friendship, and as the reward of Abraham's faith: And I am sure that the inference from hence, that the law could not disannul the promise, is absolutely just upon this interpretation; since it is impossible that a promise made by God himself to a good man, as a pledge of God's friendship to him, and as the reward of a signal instance of his faith, can ever be vacated by a subsequent law, in which Abraham was no party, given purely upon account of the transgressions of those to whom

this shews the essential difference between the law of Moses, and the promise to Abraham; because God was the one single party who made the promise to Abraham, without the intervention of angels, or help of a Mediator. So that as the law's being given by a Mediator shews it was given because of transgressions, so the promise to Abraham, as made immediately by God without a Mediator, shews it was given as an argument of God's friendship with him, and as the reward of his faith. And therefore it is impossible that the promise given to Abraham as his reward, could be annulled by any subsequent law to the Jews, which owed its original to their very transgressions.

21 *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

If it be objected here, that the assigning the transgressions of the Jews, as the reason of God's giving them the law, seems to be a setting up the law in opposition to the promises, and so destroying the great intention of them; I answer no such consequence as this will follow: The quite contrary inference is true, viz. that the promise by faith to Abraham must have been cancelled, if the law of Moses, given to the Jews, had been such a one as could have entitled them to life in the acceptance and favour of God. For upon this supposition, righteousness and justification must have been by a conformity to the works of the law, contrary to the promise, That in Abraham all nations should be blessed, i. e. justified by faith as he was.

22 *But*

But

whom it was delivered, and to restrain them from all future transgressions, by threatening to them the severest punishments. No inference more justly follows from any premises whatsoever; and in this sense the original word *εἷς*, *one*, is used in this very chapter, ver. 28. *ye are all one*; *εἷς* as it were *one person in Christ*. And thus God was the *εἷς*, the one only party who delivered the promise to Abraham.

Ver. 21. *If there had been a law given which could have given life.*] This seems to be an assertion that the law of Moses could not give life; and yet the same apostle tells us, Rom. vii. 10. *that the commandment was ordained to life*; between which two passages there is an appearance of contrariety, but none in reality; for though the Mosaic law proved in its effects, and by reason of the great proneness of the Jews to idolatry and vice, a law of condemnation, and so could not possibly give life to those it shut up under a curse; yet the original design of it was to prevent the transgressions of the Jews, and to secure them the effects of the divine favour in all temporal blessings, if they were careful to obey it; so that *the commandment or the law was unto life*, as it promised life to them that perfectly obeyed it, temporal life with all the prosperity attending it; and yet *it could not give life*, i. e. justification, pardon, and acceptance with God to sinners who transgressed it, because it pronounced, *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things, written in the law to do them*. So that *the law was good and holy*, as it commanded nothing but what was fit to be commanded; and yet it was a law unto death, as it left under condemnation every person, who in a single instance wilfully transgressed it. Now the apostle justly argues, 'that if such a law had been given to the Jews as could have given them life, or secured to sinners justification from the guilt and punishment of sin, then righteousness would have been by the law, and thus the promise of God would have been

of

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But that righteousness and life are not to be obtained by the works of the law of Moses, is evident from the writings of the Old Testament themselves; which have pronounced all men, Jews, as well as Gentiles, sinners, and so under the sentence of condemnation; that so all may see an equal necessity of embracing God's promise, and believing in Jesus Christ, that they may obtain the blessedness of being justified by faith in him.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed.

So that before this dispensation of being justified by faith took place, we were as Jews, kept under a sort of hard and rigid custody; a law that left us under sin and condemnation, and thus shut up under confinement and discipline, till that better time should come, when the promise to Abraham's seed should take place, and the doctrine of justification by faith should be preached to all nations.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to

Hence, instead of boasting of the law of Moses, and depending on the works of it for justification, we

* of no effect; which expressly declared, 'that righteousness, or the acceptance and pardon of a sinner should be the consequence and reward of a true faith.' This would have been to have set up the law in opposition to God's promises, and indeed wholly to have destroyed the purport and intention of them.

Ver. 22. *The scripture hath concluded all under sin.*] Not made them sinners by imputing sins to them they were never guilty of, but hath expressly charged and pronounced Jews as well as Gentiles sinners. And to this purpose, the apostle cites many passages out of the scriptures themselves, Rom. iii. 10, &c. The word the apostle uses is the most general that can be, *Τα πάντα*, "All things," that the Jews might not think themselves excepted from the common charge; but that by discerning their own sinfulness and guilt, they might see the folly of expecting pardon from that law of Moses, which only shewed them their guilt and condemnation, but made no provision for their justification and acceptance, and might thereby be persuaded to believe in Christ, that they as well as the Gentiles might be justified by faith in him.

Ver. 23. *Before faith came,*] i. e. before the promise to Abraham's seed, "that all nations should be justified by faith as Abraham was, took place; or till the appearance of the Messiah, Abraham's seed, who was to make all men partakers of the blessedness of faith." For the doctrine of justification by faith was to be introduced by, and take place under him, according to the original promise to Abraham.

Ibid. *We were kept under the law, shut up.*] The word rendered *kept*, signifies to be kept in custody or durance; and as the apostle compares the law to a schoolmaster in the next and following verses, he evidently means, that from the delivery of the law to the coming of the Messiah, and the taking place of the promise to Abraham by him; the Jews were in the condition of children, not arrived to years of maturity, and kept in custody under the discipline of the law, that chastised them for every offence, and rigorously exacted the punishment of every offence, without any abatement, or hope of pardon. And in this condition they were shut up till the revelation of faith, i. e. bound under a dispensation that could not be abrogated; or shut up and kept a distinct people from the rest of the world, till the great blessedness of justification by faith should be revealed by the Messiah to mankind. The truest description that could be made of the state of the Jews, and the peculiar end of that law that was given them.

Ver. 24. *The law was our schoolmaster, εἰς Χριστόν.*] i. e. either in comparison of Christ, or till the time of Christ. The words will equally bear both interpretations, and they each of them will suit the scope of the apostle's argument; for if it was a schoolmaster in comparison of Christ, the doctrine of the gospel must be more excellent than the rudiments of the law, and the discipline of it fitter for persons arrived at manhood and years of maturity, and is therefore a reason why they should forsake

to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

26 *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

27 *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*

28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

29 *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and*

we ought to look on it as no better than a rigorous schoolmaster, fit only to keep children under discipline, in comparison of Christ, and till his coming, under whom we are to obtain justification and righteousness by faith.

But now since this method of God's justifying us by faith is revealed by Christ, we ought to look upon our selves as emancipated and quite freed from this school discipline of children; from this servile subjection to a pedagogue.

And to look upon ourselves as what we really are, as Christians; the sons of God, arrived at maturity, and capable of inheriting the blessedness promised us; even that justification and adoption, which is the certain effect of a genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

For as many of you without exception as have been baptized into the faith and religion of Christ, are thereby become his disciples, and as such interested in all the blessings of his gospel.

For in him, under the dispensation of his gospel, there is no distinction of nation, or condition, or sex. Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, male and female, are all considered as one person in him.

And if you are thus united to and become one with Christ, ye are by necessary consequence the true

for sake the law, and embrace the gospel of Christ in the room of it. If the law was a schoolmaster till the time of Christ, it could have power over men no longer than till his coming; and so it is a reason why we should submit to Christ's instructions, and depend on our faith in him for justification and pardon; and look on our selves as released from our servile subjection, to the discipline of this schoolmaster, and assert our freedom, privileges, and inheritance as the sons of God.

Ver. 26. *Children of God.* Υἱοὶ Θεοῦ. *Sons of God.*] Not children in a state of infancy or nonage; but sons of God, of full age, and arrived at years capable of inheriting.

Ver. 27. *Have put on Christ.*] Baptism is styled the putting on of Christ, because those who were baptised were baptised into Christ, i. e. into the profession and belief of his religion, and of consequence were entitled to all the privileges of that profession.

Ver. 28. *Ye are all one in Christ,* εἰς ἓσ. *]* Ye are looked on and considered as one person in Christ, by virtue of the original promise, "that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed." Of consequence all who believe in him, of whatsoever nation, condition, or sex, shall be blessed by him as certainly as if the promise had been made to a single person. The Gentiles, who believe, have an equal claim to Abraham's blessedness, as well as the Jews; for faith is the great condition of the blessedness, and therefore whosoever believes shall not fail of inheriting it.

Ver. 29. *If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed,* *]* i. e. as all nations were blessed in Abraham, and as this blessedness was to be derived on all nations by the Messiah Abraham's principal seed, it follows, that those who were to inherit Abraham's blessedness by virtue of this original grant, were the true seed of Abraham, that were to claim from him; that the Jews, who were his natural descendants, had no right to this blessedness without faith, and therefore were not that seed who were to inherit by the Messiah. But that the Gentiles of all nations, who believed in God as Abraham did, were in reality his family, posterity or seed, to whom the original promise in Christ related, and

and heirs according to the true seed of Abraham through him, and the heirs of his blessedness, according to that promise, That in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, by being justified by faith as he was.

From the whole of what hath been said, we may learn our happiness and privileges as Christians: We who are believers in the true Messiah, are the genuine seed of Abraham according to the promise, we are the children of the living God; for us is reserved the blessedness of life, justification, and acceptance with God to eternal happiness: We are one with Christ, coheirs with him of everlasting glory. If through the infirmity of human nature we have offended, and thereby exposed our selves to the Divine displeasure, for us there is hope of pardon and mercy. For in Christ we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of the grace of God; only let us be careful to purify our hearts by faith in God and the Redeemer; and in consequence of it to yield an universal obedience to the commands of the gospel, and then we have a sure claim to the possession of immortal life; a claim derived from the Divine promise, and certain as the power and truth of the eternal and unchangeable God.

The apostle, having in the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, expressly declared, That under the Christian dispensation the believing Gentiles were equally Abraham's seed with the Jews, and as truly heirs to Abraham's blessedness as they could be, proceeds in this chapter to answer an objection, that a Jew would naturally make on this head; an objection, which, though but supposed here, is expressly mentioned, Rom. iii. 1. *What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?* The objection in its full strength is this: 'If it be true, that while we were under the law, we were no better than children under a schoolmaster, kept under bondage till the revelation of the Messiah; will it not follow, that our being descended of Abraham was of no benefit and service to us? And that we had no more title to claim justification and life, as the descendants of Abraham, than the meanest slave hath to claim a property in his master's estate?' An objection, that must appear very strong to the proud Jews, who had been taught to look upon themselves as the favourites, and only children of God, and heirs of the world, as the natural descendants of faithful Abraham. To this objection the apostle argues, that supposing them the heirs of Abraham, yet that this will not at all invalidate his account of their condition under the law; and this he illustrates by a known and familiar instance amongst men.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

CHAP. IV.

1 Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth

The condition of the Jews under the law, may be well compared to that of a child, heir to an estate; who whilst he is an infant, and before he comes

and from which they had a sure claim to the blessedness he possessed, from the veracity and faithfulness of God himself. The consequence of all which is, that they were to be justified by faith only as the seed of Abraham; since this was the blessedness that Abraham possessed, and was entailed by God on his family in the Messiah.

Ver. 1. *Differs nothing from a servant.*] i. e. is as truly kept under subjection, and is no more at his

differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father :

3 Even so, when we were children, we were in bondage, under the elements of the world.

4 But when the fulness of the

comes of age, differs nothing from a servant, because he cannot make use of his fortune, and hath not the full possession of his liberty; though the sole property of the estate be in him, and he is the real owner and lord of the inheritance;

Notwithstanding this, he is subject to the will of his tutors and guardians, until the time appointed by his father for his taking possession and managing of his own estate :

In like manner, we who are Jews, may well be looked on as in our infant state, whilst we were under the severe discipline of the law, and kept in servitude to the rites and ceremonies of it, which were many of them used even by idolatrous nations, and can at best be looked on only as the outlines and lowest rudiments in the affair of religion.

But when the full season came, determined by the will

his own disposal, and hath no more power over his own property than the meanest servant. All wise nations have set times when persons are allowed to be of full age, and to take possession of their estates; and besides this, fathers oftentimes, by their will, fix a certain time before which their heirs shall not be capable of inheriting: And this, as more aptly denoting the wise disposals of God's providence, the apostle mentions at ver. 2.

Ver. 2. *But is under tutors and governors.*] *Επιτροπος* signifies both a child's Guardian to take care of his person and estate, and his Instructor and Tutor; *επιτροπος και τε παιδος και των χρηματων*. *Ælian*. V. H. l. 3. c. 26. See also *Id*. l. 13. c. 44. Here it properly signifies the latter, his Preceptor or Tutor. The next word *οικονομος*, which we render Governor, here denotes his guardian, who is to take care of his person and estate; and to each of these the heirs to large inheritances are generally subject, even as servants are subject to their proper masters.

Ver. 3. *Even so, when we were children.*] The apostle speaks here in the persons of Jews, representing them in a state of nonage, during their subjection to the law of Moses: And this was really a just representation of their condition; for Abraham's blessedness was not to come upon mankind, so as that they could have any claim to it from the promise of God, but in and through the Messiah, his proper seed. By consequence, mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, though the promise of God constituted them a kind of heirs, yet could have no claim from the divine grant to inherit as Abraham's seed, till the Messiah should appear; for this was the time, which the great Father of the family of mankind had fixed, to put all believers into possession of this blessedness. But as God gave the Jews such a law as separated them from the rest of the world, and was to last till the appearance of the Messiah, and did it self point out the necessity of believing in him for righteousness and life; it is with the highest reason they are compared to children under tutors and guardians, especially as the law exacted a very rigid observance, and severely punished their neglects, and taught them little more than the outlines and first rudiments of true and acceptable religion.

Ibid. *We were in bondage under the elements of the world.*] The apostle calls the Jewish ceremonies worldly elements; because though appointed by God, yet they bore a great affinity to those which were in use amongst the Gentiles themselves; as plainly appears in the affair of their priesthood, sacrifices, washings, festivals, and almost all the pomp of their ritual worship; which could be considered only as a ruder draught, the first outlines, or rough unfinished sketches of true religion.

To these, he says, the Jews *were in bondage*; their very religion made them a kind of slaves; the expences necessary to support their Temple worship were very great, and a constant burthen upon their estates: Their frequent washings and purifications must have been attended with many great inconveniencies; their annual journies to Jerusalem, which all the male Jews were thrice every year obliged to perform, were both costly and troublesome; so that they might well cry out, "What a weariness is it!" Upon which account the apostle Peter calls the Mosaic law, even in Jerusalem itself, "a yoke; which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear," *Acts* xv. 10. The being under such a law was really a state of slavery and bondage; and therefore the Jews, who were heirs of the promises, differed nothing, whilst they were under it, from servants.

Ver. 4. *When the fulness of time was come.*] These words plainly refer to the second verse, where,

the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of

will and council of God the Father, when the promise to Abraham and his seed was to take place; God sent into the world his only begotten Son, born of a woman, and therefore her true seed, and made in all things subject to the Mosaic law, even as the Jews themselves were;

Not to establish the perpetual observance of this law, as necessary to justification, but to fulfil it by his obedience, and to introduce the method of justification by faith, and thereby to rescue the Jews themselves from that bondage they were under to it; that both Jews and Gentiles might be constituted by adoption the sons of God.

And as the evidence and demonstration that ye are thus constituted the sons of God, only by faith in

it is said, That the heir is under tutors, till the time appointed of the father. Now the fulness of time is that season when the heir is declared to be of age, and becomes *sui juris*, and takes his estate into his own hands; and, as stripped of the metaphor denotes, that season which God the Father had determined in his own councils, to make Jews and Gentiles partakers of Abraham's promised blessedness by faith, or when all the families of the earth should be blessed in his seed.

When this fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. Abraham's seed was to be his descendant; accordingly Christ, the Son of God, was born of one of Abraham's daughters. And as all the Jews were put under subjection to the law of Moses, the apostle adds, That he was born under the law, to shew that he was one of Abraham's genuine posterity, and not descended from a mixed apostate race, who as such were cut off from the Jewish commonwealth, and neither deserved the name of Jews, nor were entitled to the promises which God hath made them.

Ver. 5. *To redeem them that were under the law.*] When persons are freed from slavery, they are properly said to be redeemed. The law of Moses was a yoke upon the necks of the Jews, and they were in as real a servitude to it as a child or servant to a rigorous master. Now Christ came to redeem them from it, by setting them free from their subjection to this schoolmaster, tutor, and guardian, declaring them of full age, and that the time appointed by the father was actually come for their being put into the possession of the promised inheritance. This is evidently the comparison which the apostle pursues, as appears by what he farther adds:

Ibid. That we might receive the adoption of sons.] i. e. that we Gentiles might become the sons of God, and with the Jews inherit Abraham's blessedness by faith. And this is added with great propriety, because the redemption of the Jews from the servile subjection to the law of Moses, and the adoption of the Gentiles into the family of God, were both equally necessary to fulfil the original promise, "That in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth should be blessed."

Ver. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.*] By the Spirit, is here unquestionably meant the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were given in confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and as an immediate token from God of the acceptance of all who believed in Christ, and their being constituted through him heirs of eternal life. This Spirit the apostle here calls the Spirit of God's Son, not only to denote his being conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ, but farther to insinuate to them, that as this Spirit was in a peculiar manner the Spirit of the Son of God, so it constituted those on whom it came, the children of God. It was universally the spirit of the sons or children of God, both as sent by Christ, and as received by those who believed in him: And accordingly,

Ibid. When sent into the heart, it cries, Abba, Father.] In which expression there is evidently a figure; the Spirit being said to cry, Abba, or Father, because these extraordinary gifts being the evidence of the adoption of those on whom they were conferred, enabled them to pray to God with the confidence of children, and to apply to him under the engaging character of Abba, i. e. Father. A like figurative speech we have, Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit it self helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Now making intercession, and groanings unutterable, can never be literally ascribed to that divine Person, who is generally understood by the Spirit: The meaning therefore plainly is, That as the Spirit, in his extraordinary gifts, bears witness with our

of his Son, into your hearts,
crying, *Abba, Father.*

7 *Wherefore thou art no
more a servant but a son; and
if a son, then an heir of God
through Christ.*

8 *Howbeit, then, when ye
knew not God, ye did service
unto them which by nature
are no gods.*

9 *But now, after that ye
have known God, or rather
are*

in Christ, God hath vouchsafed to you the Holy Ghost in all those extraordinary gifts that have been conferred on you, according to the promise of Christ, and in confirmation of the truth of his religion; even those extraordinary gifts, which are abundantly sufficient of themselves to inspire your hearts with confidence towards God, and cause you to pray to him as your reconciled Father, without your paying any regard or conformity to the law of Moses.

Hence therefore thou oughtest not to look on thy self, since the time thou believedst in Christ, as in a state of servile subjection to the elementary religion of the law of Moses, but as a son fully come to age and manhood; and, in consequence of this, as an heir to the blessedness of Abraham by faith, and as having an actual right to the immediate possession of it, according to the promise of God through Christ.

The time was indeed when ye were ignorant of the true God; and no wonder that ye were then slaves to superstitious rites and ceremonies, which ye performed in honour of those, who neither had the perfections, nor deserved the adoration of gods.

But since you have been made acquainted, by the gospel of Christ, with the only living and true God,
and

spirit, or is a full conviction to our minds that we are the children of God; in like manner this same Spirit is a great support to us under all our infirmities and persecutions for the sake of Christ. For though it oftentimes may happen, that we may be in such circumstances of distress, as not to be able to know what in particular we ought to pray for; yet even in such a case, these gifts of the Spirit of God, which assure us of our being his children, will teach us as powerful, though a different kind of intercession, and to supply the place of particular petitions with the inward sighs and groans of an upright heart; which, though the tongue cannot utter them, yet are known to God who searcheth the heart, and accepted as the sense and breathings of an honest distressed spirit,—thus by inward sighs, where words may fail it, interceding for the oppressed and persecuted saints of God. From this office of the Spirit, the apostle draws the conclusion at ver. 7.

Ver. 7. The words, *servant, son, and heir*, used here by the apostle, are to be understood in reference to what went before. Thou art no more a servant, i. e. a child under age, and therefore nothing differing from a servant, but a son, viz. arrived at age, and consequently an heir, who hast a right immediately to possess the promised inheritance. The apostle having thus solidly proved his point, that faith was the only principle that could constitute either Jew or Gentile the children of God, and heirs of the blessedness of eternal life, now comes to apply himself more directly to the Gentile converts in Galatia, and pleads with them in the most polite and genteel, the most tender and affectionate manner that can be. He first puts them in mind of their condition before their conversion, ver. 8.

Ver. 8. *Ye did service*, ἐδουλεύσατε.] The word is the same as at ver. 3. where we render it, *were in bondage*; and thus it should be rendered here; ‘ye served as bondmen or slaves.’

Τοῖς μὴ φύσει ὄντι θεοῖς. *Unto them which by nature are no gods*, i. e. who really were no gods at all; some of those things which the Heathens worshipped being fictitious beings, that had no existence; others being dead men; and others evil and apostate spirits, who had neither the perfections, nor deserved the homage and adoration of gods.

Ver. 9. *Or rather are known of God*, γινώσκοντες.] The being known of God here denotes, their
being

are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

10 *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

11 *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain.*

12 *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am. For I am as ye are.*

and the acceptable method of worshipping him; or rather, since you have been so fully approved of God, as to receive the spirit of adoption from him; whence is it that you are returned again to those elements and ceremonies, which are incapable of justifying you, and have but little of the nature of true religion in them? Whence is it that you should have an inclination to bring your selves again under bondage to them?

Have I, who have been under God the instrument of your conversion, ever pressed on you the observance of the Jewish sabbaths, new moons, their solemn festivals and fasts, their septennial sabbaths, and years of Jubilee?

I am in fear for you, lest all my pains bestowed on you should be finally in vain, and I should lose the fruit of my labours, by your forsaking the simplicity and truth of the gospel of Christ.

Prevent my fears, and may ye thus be ever to me as my self, dear and beloved as my own person, even as

being acknowledged and accepted as the children of God, of which the Spirit in its miraculous gifts was the great evidence and proof.

Ibid. *How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?*] The Galatians had been converted from the superstitions of Paganism, to the plain and simple worship of Christianity; and as they seemed inclined to embrace the Jewish religion, he calls it a returning to those weak and beggarly elements they had forsaken, because in reality there was a great conformity between the ritual of the law of Moses, and the practice of the Gentiles in their forms of worship; and because the ceremonies of the law of Moses were in themselves as weak and ineffectual to justify sinners, and as poor and mean, i. e. as much different from the nature of true and acceptable religion, as many of the very rites made use of by the Gentiles themselves. And hereby the apostle artfully and yet tenderly reproaches them upon account of their Judaizing, as only exchanging one poor ineffectual mean and worthless form of religion and worship for another. After having thus asked them, "How turn ye again to these weak and beggarly elements," he farther enquires;

Ver. 10. *Do ye observe days, and months, and times, and years?*] For thus I would read the words by way of interrogation, the reproof being stronger as well as more tender in this manner of expression; for though it sufficiently lays home the charge, yet it intimates something of an hope that it might be otherwise. The apostle throws off the part of an accuser, and leaves their own consciences to do that office for him: By *days* he unquestionably means their weekly sabbaths and festivals; by *months* the festivals of the new moons; by *times* their annual fasts and festivals; and by *years* their sabbatical and jubilee years, once in seven and fifty years. 'Do you, who are converted to Christ, observe these poor institutions?' How moving and just is what he adds at the next verse, verse 11.

Ver. 11. *I am afraid of you.*] He doth not wholly give them up as lost, though he expresses a just concern for their danger, and his own pain and uneasiness at the apprehension of it.

Ver. 12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as ye are.*] The words in the original stand thus, and lose much of their beauty by being transposed; *be ye as I myself, because I was as your selves. Brethren, I beseech you: You have injured me in nothing.* Every word is warm and pathetic. *Be as I myself*, i. e. let me not lose my labour in your conversion, that thus you may be to me as my self, dear and beloved as my own person; *for I*, once was *as your own selves*, as much esteemed and beloved as your own persons. *Brethren*—The title as here used hath a real charm in it; *I beseech you*, viz. by our mutual love, and sameness of our affection. *Ye have not injured me*: I entreat you by your concern for your own happiness; and as a person, not whom you have injured, and one whose conversation and friendship you may therefore refuse or despise, through fear, shame, or hatred—

are. *Ye have not injured me at all.*

13 *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first.*

14 *And my temptation, which was in the flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected: but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

15 *Where is then the blessedness you spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

16 *Am I therefore become your*

as I was once as dear to you as your own selves. Give me therefore leave, brethren, to entreat you by the former affectionate regard to me; for it would be unjust in me to complain of your having ever injured me.

No: I bear you witness how much you once loved me. For though you cannot but know and remember that when I first preached the gospel to you, it was with great bodily weakness and infirmity;

Yet so far were ye from despising and scornfully treating me, upon account of that disorder in my flesh, which was my trial and affliction, that ye received me in as honourable and friendly a manner, as ye would have done an angel of God; yea almost as ye could have received Jesus Christ himself.

And how great was the happiness you then thought your selves possessed of? So great, that I must be your witness, ye would not have grudged me what was dearest to you, out of gratitude to me; no, not your very eyes, had it been possible for you to have given them me.

And can your sentiments of me be thus changed, as

tred—No: I beseech you by all my former interest in your affections, and by those high regards which you once expressed towards my person and ministry; as the next verses shew us.

Ver. 13, 14. *The infirmity and temptation in the flesh*, which the apostle speaks of, are by some understood to mean the persecutions which he underwent in preaching the gospel; but this I apprehend could never be his meaning, because this could never be a reason why they should despise him, or treat him with scorn and contempt; or, as the original word signifies, spit out with abhorrence. The apostle hath reference unquestionably to what he speaks of, 2 Cor. xii. *His infirmity, his thorn in the flesh, and messenger of Satan*; upon account of which he was reproached by the false apostles as *base* in outward appearance, as one *weak in his bodily presence*, and whose *speech was contemptible*, 2 Cor. x. 1, 10. It was probably some tremor or convulsive motion of his nerves, arising from those extraordinary revelations which were communicated to him, or the glory that struck him blind at his first conversion, or the impressions that were made on him, when he was snatched up into the third heavens. This bodily infirmity seems to have been some discouragement to the apostle himself, as he was reproached for it by those false teachers, who set up in opposition to him, and probably derided for it by others, and sometimes his very doctrine was ridiculed upon account of it: But the Galatians offered him no injury on this head; notwithstanding this his infirmity they received him as a messenger of God, and thought themselves extremely happy in his presence.

Ver. 15. *Where is then the blessedness you spake of?* In the original it is, and should have been thus rendered; *what was then your happiness?* 'How great your satisfaction!' Even so great, that out of gratitude they would have given him what was most dear to them; which the apostle expresses, by the proverbial expression of pulling out their eyes to have given them to him; and with what address he puts them in mind of their former affection to him, every man must see who reads the next words at ver. 16.

Ver. 16. *Am I become your enemy?* 'I the beloved Paul, whom ye once loved more than your eyes, whom ye received as an angel of God, whom ye honoured almost as though I had been Jesus Christ himself, upon account of that gospel I preached to you: Am I now become your enemy only because I warn you against forsaking or corrupting that very gospel, and exhort you to adhere to the truth and purity of it?' How severely and yet how softly doth he reproach them for their fickleness and inconstancy! How strong is the reproof that is thus drawn from arguments of love!

your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 *They zealously affect you, but not well. Yea they would exclude you, that you might affect them.*

18 *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing; and not only when I am present with you.*

as that you should esteem me your enemy, only because I faithfully represent your danger to you, and warn you against falling from the truth and simplicity of the gospel?

I know that your Judaizing teachers are very zealous in courting your affection and regard; but it can be with no good design, because they would exclude me, who have been the instrument of your conversion, from a share in your affection; that you may the more diligently court their favour, and be the more easily seduced by them to forsake that gospel which I have preached to you.

But if your first affection for me was well grounded, it is but just you should continue it towards me always, as well when I am absent from, as when present with you. For it is honourable to maintain that friendship which was first founded on reason, and just esteem.

R E M A R K S.

How excellently well qualified was this apostle, for that work to which the providence of God raised him! As he understood the whole scheme of the gospel, so he had all the arts of persuasion in the most masterly manner. He knew the passions of human nature well, and the way of applying to them most effectually.

Ver. 17. *They zealously affect you.*] The apostle seems to throw in this by way of apology for these Galatians; kindly extenuating, instead of aggravating, their fault. And it is as though he had said, 'If your affection for me is altered or cooled, I am ready to impute it more to their arts than to your fault. They studiously court your affection, and are jealous lest I should have any share in your esteem:' But adds the apostle,

Ibid. *They don't affect you well.*] 'It is not with a good design, nor by lawful arts and methods, that they thus endeavour to inveigle your affections; it is not by endeavouring to promote your salvation, or preaching the truth of the gospel of Christ.'

Ibid. *Yea, [or, but] they would exclude you.*] 'Their design is to exclude you from my affection and care, and engross you wholly to themselves.' Other copies read, "*But they would exclude us,*" viz. 'me your once beloved Paul, from your esteem and affection, that you might wholly affect them, that they might engross your love intirely to themselves, and thereby wholly prevent the good effect of all my admonitions and instructions to you.' Whichever be the true reading, (and they are both good,) it plainly appears, that these Judaizing teachers had used low arts and subtil methods to raise themselves into an esteem amongst the Galatian converts, and had endeavoured to excite an irreconcilable difference between them and the apostle, that either they might render them insensible to all his reproofs, or cause him to give them up as irrecoverably lost. But he adds, ver. 18.

Ver. 18. *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.*] That the apostle means, "It is good and honourable to maintain that friendship and esteem for a person, and consequently to himself, which is founded upon truth and reason, and not to be inconstant and fickle," is evident from his adding: *And not only when I am present with you.* And therefore his full meaning is, 'That as you once thought your selves happy in my friendship, and loved me with the strongest affection, when I was with you, and preached the gospel to you, so I am still worthy of the same share of your affection, though I am absent from you; for I still bear you the tenderest love, and press on you nothing but your continuance in that gospel, which at first I preached to you: And therefore it is neither honourable nor decent for you to renounce my friendship, or exclude me from your own, for the sake of any other persons whatsoever.'

ally:

ally: His addressees to the hopes and fears, the gratitude and love of those he wrote to, are plain yet masterly, easy and yet almost inimitable. His manner of writing hath all the charms of rhetoric, but nothing of the false ornament that generally attends it. The cause, he pleaded, was good, the cause of God and the crucified Redeemer; and the weapons he employed in defence of it, were nervous arguments, and the most engaging entreaties: Not stiffly insisting on the prerogatives of an Apostle, he treated all men as his brethren, and put on the condescension of one of the meanest of Christ's ministers. The great point he had in view, was to keep the religion of Christ free from the incumbrance of mean and worthless ceremonies, and to maintain the liberties of the Christian church, in opposition to the attempts of these false teachers, who endeavoured to enslave them. As he was the apostle of the Gentiles, let us remember, Brethren, he is ours. The liberty he pleads for is our birthright as Christians; maintain therefore that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free. A religion burthened with ceremonies is a real slavery; thus far it is not the religion of the gospel, and whosoever they be who press on you the observance of them, they preach not Christ, but a corrupt and spurious Christianity. See therefore that you worship God in spirit and truth.

The apostle having largely proved his main point, that the Gentiles, who believed in Christ, were constituted the children of God, by faith, and thereby made heirs of the blessedness of faithful Abraham; and that as such they were in a state of much more excellent liberty than the Jews themselves, who were subject to the law of Moses; proceeds to represent the different states of Jews and Christians, by the different conditions and characters of the two sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Ismael, by his two wives, Sarah and Hagar. And with respect to this representation, which he calls an *allegory*, let it be observed:

1. That an allegory is only the representation of one thing by another, which was a very frequent method of instruction made use of by the ancients. Our Saviour himself taught the people in parables, and represented the doctrines of his kingdom by metaphors, and similitudes, drawn from objects that were familiar to those who attended him. Thus he shewed the different conditions of a poor good man, and a rich wicked one, in the other world, under the feigned names and characters of Dives and Lazarus; and indeed he generally made use of such kind of parables, in order the more familiarly and safely to convey his doctrines to the people who attended on him. But

2. Allegories or parables are not intended so much for proof, as illustration, to make plain and familiar what is real truth and sufficiently proved, or what shall hereafter certainly come to pass. Thus, when Christ represented his kingdom under the similitude of a *grain of mustard seed*, he did not intend to argue, that because a grain of mustard, which is the least of seeds, shoots up into a great tree, therefore his kingdom, though small in the beginning, should arrive to a very great height and largeness; but only to shew, by this instance, the quick and extensive progress of his doctrine in the world. In like manner, in the allegory before us, the apostle doth not intend to argue, that because Isaac was born free, and Ismael born a slave, therefore Christians are free, and the Jews in bondage. No: This he had solidly shewn already, and he brings

brings the instances of these two brethren and their mothers, only to illustrate, by a known history, what he had before solidly and abundantly proved; much less doth he pretend to affirm, that this history, which he relates, was originally intended to denote the different circumstances of Christians and Jews, or that this mystic allegorical sense was the original and primary sense of the history. No: St. Paul was not so weak a man, and had no intention to expose his doctrine to contempt by such kind of arguments in proof of it: his design was principally illustration, though indeed the history doth prove one thing substantially, and which was very much to his purpose to observe, viz. that even Abraham's natural posterity might be slaves and bondmen, as appeared in the case of Ismael; and therefore the apostle's representing the Jews as under a state of bondage might be very true, notwithstanding they were Abraham's descendants according to the flesh. The particular aptness of this allegory will be observed in the explication of it.

TEXT.

19 *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.*

20 *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.*

21 *Tell me, ye that desire to*

PARAPHRASE.

O my little children, how great is my uneasiness, arising from the fear of your forsaking the simplicity of the gospel! Though I have been once already the instrument of your conversion, yet I am forced as it were to be in travail with you again, and am in the greatest distress and pain, till you become formed into the true knowledge and reception of pure and uncorrupted Christianity.

I had, if it so pleased God, rather come to you in person, than write to you thus at a distance; that I might alter my voice, and reprove, commend, and speak more gently and severely, as your circumstances should require; because I am almost in doubt for you, in what manner I should write unto you, or how far this Judaizing spirit may carry you.

You, who have such an inclination to be in bondage

Ver. 19. *My little children.*] The apostle expresses under this similitude, the tenderest affection and concern for them, and the distress of his mind till they were brought back again to the pure doctrine of Christianity, which many of them seem to have forsaken. He had been the instrument of their first conversion, and upon this account calls them his children; and to shew his ardent and sincere affection towards their welfare, and the difficulties he had undergone in forming them to the knowledge of God and Christ, he represents himself as their mother that had given them life, and being. And as they were to be recovered from their Judaizing spirit and behaviour, he tells them that he was as a mother travelling in birth with them a second time, till Christ was formed in them, i. e. till they were formed into the true spirit of Christianity, or become thoroughly Christian both in principle and practice: For Christ can be no otherwise formed in men, than as they are brought to a thorough belief of, and obedience to, his gospel.

Ver. 20. *To change my voice.*] φωνη signifies not only a voice, but the thing that is spoken, Ælian. V. H. p. 347. whether it be by word of mouth, or by letter. And therefore when the apostle says, "that he desired to change his voice," he means, "he should be glad to be present and converse with them personally, instead of writing to them at a distance; because then he could be more fully informed of their true state, and better able to know how to order his discourse to them."

Ver. 21. *Ye that desire to be under the law.*] This history concerning Abraham's wives and children, is not directed to, or designed for, the conversion of Gentiles, but addressed to persons

to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.*

23 *But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise.*

24 *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendeth to bondage, which is Agar.*

25 *(For*

dage to the law of Moses, tell me, do you not hear and regard what the law itself points out?

It is written in the law, that Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar the bondmaid, the other by Sarah his wife, a freewoman.

Hagar the bondmaid's son was born according to the common course of nature; but Sarah's son in an extraordinary manner, by virtue of a promise from God.

Now this history gives a just view of the two different states of Christians and Jews; and the two women well represent the different dispensations or covenants which they are respectively under. The one covenant is that which was delivered from mount Sinai, which is well denoted by Agar the bondwoman;

sons who seemed disposed to submit to the law of Moses, and who therefore could not but be well acquainted with it; therefore the illustration of his argument, by a known history taken from the law, must be exceedingly pertinent and proper in their case. And accordingly he asks them, *Do ye not hear the law?* 'Do ye not remember and consider this particular history, which the law of Moses sets before you?'

Verses 22, 23. The two main parts of this history are, the two different conditions of Abraham's wives, and of his two sons by them; the one was a bondwoman, viz. Hagar, and accordingly her son Ismael, Abraham's first born and eldest son, who was born according to the common course of nature, was born a bondsman or slave: The other wife, Sarah, was a free woman; and accordingly Isaac, who was not born in the common course of nature, but in a miraculous manner, by virtue of an immediate and special promise, was born free, and by consequence Abraham's heir, though the youngest son. Now the bare relating this history was striking: for it at first view informed them, That Abraham's posterity was twofold; the one his natural descendants after the flesh, the other his children by special promise: That Abraham's natural descendants might be bondsmen and slaves, and his children by promise the genuine heirs of liberty: That Abraham's eldest children might be excluded from the birthright, and his youngest children made heirs of his promise and blessedness. Every one of these observations were extremely to the apostle's purpose and argument, to take down the pride of the Jews, and to let them see, that natural descent, and their calling themselves the first-born of Abraham, and boasting of their liberty as his posterity, signified nothing with God, and could not of themselves entitle them to his special favour, and to the inheritance of that peculiar blessedness which was Abraham's reward; but that children of the promise, raised up in an extraordinary manner to Abraham, might be constituted his heirs, even to the exclusion of his natural descendants, if they forfeited their right by an unsuitable and unworthy behaviour. And accordingly he applies it to the case before him.

Ver. 24. *Which things are an allegory.*] The original words should be thus translated. "Which things (contained in this history) are to be allegorized," i. e. not that this is the mystical figurative sense, originally intended by these things: No; an allegory is the representation of one thing by another, and of consequence, the literal sense of the history must be the true original sense, otherwise there could be no allegory at all. The plain and only meaning of the words is:—"Which things, or history, is a very exact and just representation of the different states and tempers of Christians and Jews;" and which he accordingly proceeds particularly to point out.

These are the two covenants.] "Not designed by Moses the historian mystically to denote them; but these two women are in my allegory the two covenants. I would represent the nature and tendency of the Jewish and Christian dispensations by these two women. Agar denoteth the Jewish covenant delivered from mount Sinai; for as she gendred, i. e. brought forth children to bondage, so did the Sinai covenant bring into bondage all who were under that dispensation." The apostle adds in a parenthesis, for so should the next words be read:

Ver.

25 (*For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*)

26 *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

27 For

man; because as Agar's children were bond children as partaking of the condition of their mother; so those who were under the covenant from Sinai were also born in a condition of slavery and bondage.

(And what renders this similitude more just, is, that the name Agar denotes a rock, and that mount Sinai in Arabia is so called. However, Agar in the allegory before us, answers to the present Jerusalem, which, like Agar and her children who were the bond servants of Abraham, is with all her inhabitants in bondage to the covenant from Sinai.)

But that Jerusalem which is from above, the Christian church which is under a covenant delivered from Heaven, is in this comparison the free woman; or represented by Sarah the wife of Abraham; who being free herself, and the mother of the promised

Ver. 25. *This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia.*] i. e. this "Hagar," or, as it should have been rendered, "*This word Hagar*, signifies a rock, and is the very name given by the Arabians to mount Sinai; and therefore the covenant delivered from it is properly represented by the wife of Abraham who bears this name." The apostle adds:

And answereth to Jerusalem that now is.] This translation in our bibles evidently makes mount Sinai to answer to Jerusalem, and thus Erasmus, Grotius, and most interpreters. But this is an evident mistake, and the whole passage without the parenthesis runs thus: "the woman Hagar represents the covenant from Sinai, and therefore in the present allegory must also answer to the Jerusalem which now is," i. e. must be considered as the mother of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, in bondage to the law from Sinai, as Hagar's son was the bond-servant of Abraham; for nothing can be more plain, than that Agar and her son were designed to represent the covenant from Sinai, and the Jews who were under it: and by consequence, as the nature of Moses his law, which tended to slavery, was denoted by Agar's condition, that of a bondwoman; so the condition of the Jews under the law, was denoted by the condition of her son: and therefore she answers in the allegory to the Jews, i. e. is considered as the mother of them. The next verse makes this evident beyond dispute.

Ver. 26. *But Jerusalem from above is free.*] It should have been rendered; *but the freewoman is*, or answers in the allegory to, *the Jerusalem which is above; which is the mother*, which freewoman is the mother, of us all, viz. of all Christians, as the apostle expressly says, ver. 31. *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the freewoman.* Here the allegory exactly answers: The bondwoman answers in the allegory to the Jews, the natural descendants of Abraham, whose capital is Jerusalem on this earth; but the freewoman in the allegory answers to the Jerusalem which is from above. Cities are frequently represented as the mothers of their inhabitants, both in sacred and profane writers: and therefore as the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem is each the mother of their respective citizens, so Hagar and Sarah with their respective children, exactly answer to them in the similitude.

By the heavenly Jerusalem, the apostle means the Christian church, which is a regular, well-ordered city or community; expressly called, Heb. xii. 22. *mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*; the inhabitants or members of which are, *the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect.* The great Lord and Governor of which, is *God the judge of all*: The great Mediator, who formed this city, and established this commonwealth, and introduced that covenant which contains the charter of its privileges, and the laws of its government, and who rules and governs it under God, is the blessed Jesus. Upon which account the Christian church is very justly and beautifully denoted by the heavenly Jerusalem, as a city which hath the immediate symbols of the Divine Presence, and is the place of God's residence by his holy Spirit; it is his favourite city under his peculiar protection and government.

27. *For it is written, Re-joyce, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*

28. *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

29. *But as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted.*

promised seed by Isaac, is justly esteemed the mother of all Christians who believe in him, and who consequently must be free themselves, as partaking of the condition of the mother.

And, though the consequence will be, that if Gentiles as well as Jews are thus to be reckoned the children of Sarah, this her spiritual posterity will be more numerous than her natural; yet this will not appear strange to any one who considers the ancient prophecy, Isa. li. 1. directly relating to the Gentiles, Sing, O thou barren woman who hast born no children: Sing aloud and rejoice, thou who hast brought forth no children; for the time shall come, saith Jehovah, when thy children, though thou art now desolate, shall be more numerous than the children of the married woman.

So that, brethren, as Isaac was not born to Abraham and Sarah, according to the common course of nature, but in an extraordinary way, in virtue of a promise made of God to his parents; so we Christians also, who are Gentiles, are constituted through Isaac in Christ, the children of God, according to the promise to Abraham, "That in him all the nations should be blessed;" with other express prophecies relating to the same.

Besides, as the two mothers denote the different conditions of Jews and Christians, so the two different

Ver. 27. This prophecy evidently relates to the Gentile world, here beautifully represented, as a forsaken unmarried woman, that never had children, because the Gentiles were not constituted the church of God, nor taken into a special covenant with him, but were generally abandoned to idolatry and vice. And she is ordered to shout for joy for that happy alteration which God intended to make in her circumstances, by espousing her to himself, and giving her at length a more numerous posterity than the married wife, viz. than the church of the Jews could ever boast of, who are represented as betrothed to God, because they were under his peculiar protection, and brought into a special covenant with him. After the mention of such a remarkable prophecy, how justly doth he add in the next verse.

Ver. 28. *We are children of the promise.*] We Gentiles are the persons to whom the promise of God relates, of whom he promised in an extraordinary manner to constitute his church, his people, and his children; and we are the children of the promise as Isaac was: *κατα Ισαακ*, seems to denote, "through" or "by the means of Isaac," who was the son of Abraham by promise, and from whom that promised seed was to come, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Abraham received Isaac by promise; a like promise of God declared the Gentiles should be constituted his children; this promise was to be accomplished by the Messiah; the Messiah was to be Abraham's seed by Isaac; and therefore the Gentiles being made the children of God, is through Isaac also. Thus far the history truly points out the different conditions of Jews and Christians; the remaining part represents their disposition and conduct, and the respective consequences of them.

Ver. 29. As being *born after the flesh*, and *after the Spirit*, are here opposed; the being *born after the Spirit* must mean, Isaac's being born in a peculiar manner by the extraordinary influence of the Spirit and power of God; and thus the opposition will be just and strong, and exactly denote the different originals of Isaac and Ismael.

Ismael

secuted him that was born after the spirit; even so it is now.

30 *Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.*

31 *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free.*

ferent dispositions of the children, are an apt representation of their different tempers and circumstances: for as Ismael, who was born according to the common course of nature, derided and mocked, and thus persecuted his brother Isaac, who was born by the power, and according to the promise of God; even so the Jews, who are Abraham's natural posterity, deride and persecute us who are his spiritual seed.

But the scriptures determine their case even in this very history; for the consequence of Ismael's scornfully deriding Isaac was, his being cast out of Abraham's house with his mother, and wholly excluded from being the heir and possessor of his estate.

And in like manner, brethren, we Christians, who are the children of Sarah the free woman, through the Messiah by Isaac, are, as born free, heirs to Abraham's promise and blessedness. Whereas the persecuting Jews, who are in bondage to the law, and justly represented as the children of Agar the bond woman, shall, like her son Ismael, be, for their unbelief and wickedness, excluded from all the benefits of the Christian covenant, and from the inheritance of eternal life.

REMARKS.

The natural inference from the foregoing part of the history, that Hagar and Ismael her son were cast out, and the true correspondence of the two cases, is this; That in like manner as Ismael was rejected for persecuting his brother Isaac, so the Jews for their cruelly persecuting Christians should be rejected from being the church and people of God. But this was an inference our apostle tenderly and prudently passes over, that he might not too much irritate and exasperate the Jews; and only says, "We Gentile Christians are not the children of the bondwoman but of the free;" and leaves the ungrateful task of drawing the proper inference to the Jews themselves. The inference was obvious and plain, but he chose that the persecuting Jews should make the application, and read their own punishment in that of Ismael's.—And respecting this remarkable allegory, I think upon the whole, that a more pertinent history could never be produced, either to illustrate or confirm the apostle's main argument, or to put the Galatian converts upon a pious consideration, of the folly and mischievous consequences of their forsaking the purity of the Christian religion, and conforming

[Ismael persecuted Isaac.] The history tells us, that he laughed at, derided, and mocked him to scorn, which is real persecution; probably through pride, and the conceit of his being Abraham's eldest son and heir.

themselves to the law of Moses, to obtain justification and acceptance with God.

The DOCTRINES and PRACTICAL INFERENCES are these.

I. That the great design of God in sending his Son into the world, was to redeem the Jews from the bondage of the law, and to constitute both Jews and Gentiles the children of God by faith, verses 4, 5.

II. That the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God, was the great evidence of the adoption of the Gentiles, and what inspired them with confidence to look on God as their reconciled father, ver. 6.

III. That all sincere Christians, are by virtue of their adoption, constituted the heirs of God, as being entitled through Christ to the benefit of eternal life.

IV. That the tying men to the observance, and placing religion in the keeping of days, and months, and times, and years, is a corruption of Christianity, and an evident departure from the simplicity and purity of the gospel, verses 11, 12.

V. That friendships founded upon honesty, veracity, great usefulness, and valuable obligations received, should ever be maintained, and that it is a point of true honour and wisdom to be steady in them, ver. 18.

VI. That a prudent and affectionate representing to mistaken men the truth, and to deluded men their faults, is an argument of sincere friendship, ver. 16.

VII. That it should be the sincere endeavour of all faithful ministers, and their governing concern, not to gain over men to party notions, or proselyte them to the distinguishing opinions of a faction, but to form Christ in them, i. e. to acquaint them with the uncorrupted doctrines of Christianity, and to establish them in the practice of pure and undefiled religion, ver. 19.

VIII. That a religion abounding with numerous rites and ceremonies, is a religion that enslaves those who are under it, and deprives them of the liberty of the children of God, verses 24, 25.

IX. That the whole society of Christians is a city or community, formed upon the foundation of heavenly laws, under the protection of God himself, and governed by the Spirit and power of the Redeemer, ver. 26.

X. That the introduction of the Gentiles into the church of God, and their being constituted his people by faith, was necessary to the accomplishment of the most express predictions and promises that had been made concerning it.

XI. That deriding and scoffing others upon account of religion is a real instance of persecution, and inconsistent with the spirit and character of a true Christian, ver. 29. And finally,

XII. That nothing more endangers persons being finally rejected, and excluded from the benefits of the Christian covenant, than their indulging a persecuting temper and practice, ver. 30. "Cast out the bondwoman and her son," is the language of reason, and the voice of revelation to all persecutors, whether they persecute with the tongue or with the hands: No reasons can justify persecution for conscience sake, and whatever church practises it, whether Popish or Protestant, whether established or tolerated, it is so far an Antichristian church. To dictate to conscience is the prerogative of God, and not of a mortal man; whosoever therefore the man is, that pretends to prescribe to conscience, invades the province of God,

God, and becomes guilty of the highest presumption and insolence; and to punish men either by negative or positive penalties, for matters relating to conscience, is both injustice and cruelty. Abhor, my brethren, this Jewish spirit, which is ever a mark of apostacy from Christ, and of being rejected by God: Abhor it wherever you see it; it is detestable in all men: Zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, are the stale pretences that persecutors have ever used. But you know that the cause of God and truth, can never be promoted by violent and unchristian methods, and that the zeal of a good man may better employ itself than in reproaching, injuring, and persecuting others. "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience: Be ye not therefore partakers with them: but let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The apostle having proved by a great variety of arguments, that the Gentile converts were under no obligation to observe the law of Moses; proceeds to the proper exhortation from these words, and to engage the Galatians to continue in and adhere to their Christian liberty.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

C H A P. V.

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ

Since therefore the gospel of Christ frees us Christians from all obligations to the law of Moses, and is of itself abundantly sufficient to justify all believers; do you maintain and persevere in this your Christian liberty, and let nothing persuade you ever to come under, or be held in subjection to this yoke of bondage and slavery.

Behold, I Paul, who am an apostle by Christ Jesus, and the special designation of God the Father,

Ver. 1. *Stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free.*] The apostle unquestionably means, their freedom from the obligation of the law of Moses, which was indeed a privilege of a very valuable nature; since, by being delivered from it, they were freed from the burthensome ceremonies of the Jewish religion, from the rigid requirement of an exact and unerring obedience, and from that curse which was pronounced on all, who did not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Upon all these accounts he calls the law of Moses a yoke of bondage, and commands the Galatians not to be again entangled with it: The original word *εσχεδε*, signifies to be bound or held under it; and he assigns the reason why they should not suffer themselves to be thus bound under the fetters of the law in the next verse.

Ver. 2. *If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*] This undoubtedly refers to the Gentiles becoming circumcised, as necessary to justification and pardon, and not to the Jews who submitted to this rite as a national constitution. Circumcision indeed was of no value to them in the point of acceptance with God, since it could not in its nature recommend any person to the Divine favour; but yet, as it was a distinguishing ceremony, by which the posterity of Abraham were to be known and separated from all other people of the earth, the Jews had good reason for retaining it; especially as it was a command of God, that obliged them throughout all generations; at least whilst they continued a distinct people and kingdom. Upon this account, when Paul was at Lystra, where there

Christ shall profit you nothing.

ther, and who received the gospel I preached to you by immediate revelation from Christ himself; remember, I tell you, that if you submit to circumcision, as necessary to justification, ye can receive no benefit by Christ and his religion.

3 *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

For as I said before, so I solemnly testify again, to every man, whether Jew or Gentile, who becomes circumcised in order to obtain justification thereby, that he brings himself under obligation perfectly to obey the whole law of Moses, without which that law cannot justify any one.

4 *Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

The necessary consequence of this is, that ye can receive no benefit from the gospel of Christ; since he who hopes to be justified by an exact conformity to the law, evidently renounces the hope of justification by the grace of God, and forfeits his share in the mercy that is offered him.

5 *For*

Whereas

there were a great number of Jews, he took Timothy, who by his mother was a Jew born, and circumcised him, that he might not give them offence, or cause them to think he was an enemy to the customs of his country, so far as he could innocently observe them. Timothy was circumcised therefore to be marked and characterised as a Jew, and not because it was necessary to his partaking of the blessings of the gospel of Christ: Whereas, on the other hand, the Gentile converts, who were not of the seed of Abraham, could have no national or political reason to submit to this rite, and consequently must be supposed to submit to it on a religious account, as imagining the Christian institution to be insufficient to salvation without it. And of consequence Christ could profit them nothing, because by being circumcised in order to justification, they themselves declared that they could not obtain it by Jesus Christ.

Ver. 3. *Every man that is circumcised is a debtor to the whole law.*] Circumcision was the initiation into the Jewish covenant, and the mark that God ordered to be imprinted on the body of the Jews, as a badge of their slavery to the law of Moses; so that every grown person who yielded to it, professed himself thenceforward a Jew, and bound to observe all the rites of the Jewish law. But the apostle seems to have a farther meaning, and to intend that as they became circumcised in order to justification, they must be obliged, in consequence of that, to a perfect observance of the whole law; since he only who thus performed the law could live, or become justified by it; and so it was putting them in mind, that mere circumcision could avail them nothing, since it could not profit even the Jews themselves, unless they were in all other points conformable to the law.

Ver. 4. *Whosoever of you are justified by the law.*] i. e. not actually justified; for the apostle expressly declares, "That by the works of the law no flesh living shall be justified;" but whosoever of you are justified, viz. in your own judgment, apprehension, and desire; as many of you as fly to, and depend on the law of Moses for justification; to such of you *Christ is become of no effect.* The literal translation is, "Ye are abolished from Christ," as the word is rendered, 2 Tim. i. 10. "Or ye are wholly loosed from Christ," as it is rendered, Rom. vii. 2. Which place is exactly parallel to this; where it is said, "That the woman is loosed from her husband after his death," viz. "from all relation and subjection to him." In like manner such as depended on the law of Moses for justification, loosed themselves from all interest in Christ, and dependance on him. And thereby

Fell from grace.] i. e. forfeited the hope of being justified and saved by the gospel dispensation, which ascribes the acceptance and pardon of a sinner, intirely to the grace or mercy of God through Christ. The law of Moses is here opposed to the gospel of grace, because justification could not be had by the former, without a perfect conformity to it, which when paid rendered justification the effect of works, and not of grace. Whereas the gospel was designed for the justification of sinners, which therefore in their case must be owing entirely to the favour and mercy of God, and not to any preceding merit of works. Hence the gospel of Christ is justly described under the character of grace.

Ver.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.

7 Ye did run well: who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This

I am

Whereas it is our very character as Christians, that as we have received the spirit of adoption thro' the grace of God by faith, so we cherish in our hearts the firm hope of that eternal blessedness, which is the promised effect of justification by grace through faith.

It is therefore impossible under the Christian dispensation, that circumcision can be of any use or value to recommend persons to the Divine acceptance; or that the want of circumcision can exclude any one from the benefit of the gospel grace: No; under the gospel, faith is all in all; even that firm belief of the Christian religion which influences to, and produces, a sincere love to God and our neighbour.

And it is your commendation that you were once firmly settled in this principle, and for a season persevered in it: Whence is it, that ye have learned thus to forsake the purity and simplicity of the gospel truth?

Ver. 5. This verse seems to be added as a reason, why those who expected justification from the law of Moses, were *fallen from grace*; because *we*, viz. Christians, *wait for the hope of righteousness*, i. e. expect the blessedness of justification, which is the great object of our hope, *ἐκ πίστεως* by faith, in consequence, or as the promised reward of faith in Christ, *πνεύματι* in the Spirit, we expect in our hearts or minds this blessedness; or we expect this blessedness *through the Spirit*, upon account of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which evidence our adoption, and are therefore the surest support of our expectation and hope. This latter interpretation I prefer, as most suitable to the apostle's constant manner of arguing. Now if it be essential to the Christian character to expect the blessed fruits of justification, only through faith from the mercy of God; it is very evident, that the expecting them by a conformity to the ritual works of the law of Moses, was to fall from grace, as it was actually renouncing all dependance on the mercy of God for obtaining them.

Ver. 6. This verse is the sum, and winding up, of the whole preceding argument, or the grand conclusion drawn from it. He had solidly proved, that sinners are justified only by faith, and that their being thus justified must be owing to the grace of God: and therefore he justly infers from the whole, that in Christ Jesus, or under the Christian dispensation, circumcision avails nothing, hath no value in it self, or efficacy to procure a sinner's acceptance with God; and that uncircumcision avails as little, viz. to prevent any sinner's acceptance; but that faith availed or profited sincere believers, so as to secure their reconciliation and adoption. But lest any persons should imagine that a bare ineffectual faith was what the apostle laid so great a stress on, he very wisely adds this caution and limitation;

Faith which worketh by love, *δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*;] "rendered effectual", or "made operative by love;" or, as we render the words, "faith which worketh by love", which shews itself to be a living active principle, by producing in men all the fruits of obedience, and those virtues which are comprehended under the general character of love. He plainly intends the same as he doth, chap. vi. 15. "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" i. e. that newness of life, that universal holiness, which is the effect of a sincere belief of the gospel revelation; which is what he calls, "keeping the commandments of God," 1 Cor. vii. 7, 19. because love is properly the fulfilling of the law; it is the great comprehensive duty of mankind, to which all others may be referred, and from which as a vital and effectual principle they flow. So that the faith which justifies, or is imputed to a sinner for righteousness, and which shall secure his acceptance with God, is such a firm and hearty belief of the gospel of Christ, as changes the man's moral character, and produces an universal obedience to all the commandments of God, manifested in the revelation that he hath given us by his Son.

Ver. 7. *Ye did run well.*] The Christian life is often compared to a race; which required great alacrity

8 *This persuasion cometh
not of him that calleth you.*

I am sure that this persuasion, of the necessity of conformity to the law of Moses, is not owing to the authority of God, who hath called you to the belief of the gospel, nor to the doctrine that I have taught you, who have been the instrument under God of your conversion.

9 *A little leaven leaveneth
the whole lump.*

No: it is owing to the subtlety of those false teachers, who have been labouring to subvert you; and have been gradually instilling into your minds, doubts and suspicions of the gospel I have preached to you, till at length they have almost prevailed with all of you to give up that which is the great essential doctrine of the gospel, viz. Justification by the grace of God through faith in Christ. Thus, as a little leaven soon spreads itself throughout the whole lump, have they tainted your principles, and infected the church amongst you with their Judaizing doctrines.

10 *I have confidence in you
through the Lord, that you
will*

However, as concerning you, I trust in the Lord, and persuade myself, that for the future ye will adhere

great alacrity and vigour; and therefore the apostle here puts them in mind, that they began their Christian race, or set out well in their profession of Christianity, and continued for some time in the true profession of it. And as the prize was not to be obtained without perseverance, and running to the end, he asks them, *Who did binder you, that ye should not obey the truth?* i. e. that ye should not continue in your profession of the purity of the gospel? or run the Christian race with constancy and perseverance?

Ver. 8. *Of him that calleth you.*] These words are generally referred by interpreters to God, who is frequently said to call persons to the knowledge and belief of the gospel, as he appointed it to be preached to all nations, and raised up, and qualified persons for the work: but I should rather understand it of the apostle himself; for thus he speaks, chap. I. 6. "I marvel ye are so soon removed from him, who called you to the grace of Christ;" evidently, I think, referring to himself: and so in the place before us. "This persuasion of the necessity of circumcision to justification, was not wrought in you by him that called you. It was not the doctrine that ye learned from me, when I first preached the gospel to you." And thus it answers to the former verse: "Ye did run well." "You began your Christian profession, in the uncorrupted truth of the gospel, which I preached to you, and therefore your present persuasion is a deviation from your first faith, and not owing to any thing I taught you."

Ver. 9. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*] The apostle useth this similitude, 1 Cor. v. 6. where he commands them to deliver the incestuous person to Satan; adding as a reason, "Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" i. e. "that one single bad example may in time infect and corrupt the whole church?" And therefore when St. Paul declares, "that their persuasion, of the necessity of the law of Moses to justification, was not wrought in them by him, but that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;" he means, "That as a small quantity of leaven soon operates, and gradually spreads itself through the whole mass, till it becomes intirely infected; so this Jewish persuasion, though at first only in a few Judaizing false teachers, yet by their endeavours and artful methods, would soon spread itself amongst great numbers, and at last corrupt the whole church of Galatia." This interpretation suits best with the following words; "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment;" or, as the word signifies, "his" or "the-condemnation." This condemnation may refer to the condemnation of God, and the threatening consequently, may be understood of the Divine punishment; or it may relate to the censure, which the apostle intended to pass on the person, who had been the instrument of corrupting the faith of the Galatians; to that cutting off, which is mentioned at ver. 12.

Ver.

will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, who-soever he be.

11 *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased.*

12 *I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*

adhere to the doctrine I have taught you, and entertain no principles contrary to it; but as to the person, who hath unsettled you, and disturbed your minds about this important article of Christianity, whosoever he be, he shall fall under the weight of his deserved condemnation.

And though, brethren, those who have seduced you, may insinuate that I have preached the necessity of circumcision to justification, yet the sufferings and persecutions I endure from the malice of the Jews, is a sufficient vindication of me in this respect. For if I were to preach up circumcision, their main objection and offence against the religion of the crucified Jesus would cease; they would esteem me their friend, and my persecutions would be at an end.

But I am so far from inculcating on you the necessity of circumcision, I could even wish that all those without exception, who endeavour thus to subvert your faith, were wholly cut off from the communion of the Christian church.

The

Ver. 11. The false teachers, amongst the Galatians, had charged even St. Paul with teaching the necessity of circumcision, after his conversion; but the apostle confutes this scandal, by mentioning the continual persecutions he had suffered from the Jews, as an evident proof of their hatred to him, for preaching the doctrine of justification by faith alone. "If I yet preach circumcision," if since my commencing an apostle of the Gentiles, I have preached the necessity of it, "why do I yet suffer persecution?" What reason can be assigned of my continual persecution by the Jews? "Then is the offence of the cross ceased," i. e. according to Grotius, then my sufferings for Christ, which scandalize many against me, would be at an end. But I think the meaning rather is, 'If I now taught the necessity of circumcision, then the great objection of the Jews, that which offends them most in the gospel of the crucified Jesus, would entirely cease.' That which principally enraged the Jews against this apostle was, his every where preaching, that circumcision availed neither Jew nor Gentile to their acceptance with God, and his constantly forbidding the Gentile converts to be circumcised. The objection of Christ's crucifixion would have been more easily got over, and was so by many of the Jews; but their grand offence against the apostle, and his doctrine, and which enraged both Jews and Judaising Christians against him, and excited them to reproach and persecute him, was "that liberty from the Jewish bondage, which he every where inculcated upon the Gentile converts." This made the very doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of salvation by faith in a crucified Saviour, their aversion and abhorrence: And of consequence, the persecutions, which the apostle every where suffered from the Jews, was a full proof, that he did not gratify their prejudices, by preaching amongst them the necessity of conforming to the law of Moses. It was so far from this, that he adds:

Ver. 12. *I could wish they were even cut off.*] These words express, I think, very evidently the apostle's wish or desire, that those persons who had troubled them with their Judaising principles, were cut off; but the difficulty is, what the apostle intends by it. It is certain, he could not mean, cut off from the mercy of God. This would have been unworthy his character, and unsuitable to his own temper, who had so strong an affection for his brethren the Jews, as that he could almost wish himself separated from Christ, if that would have proved the means of their conversion to him. He must therefore certainly intend some punishment less severe; and what that is, we may learn from chap. I. ver. 8, 9. where he says, "If we or an angel from heaven, or any man, preach to you another gospel, than that which we have preached, let him be anathema," i. e. wholly cut off from, and disowned as a member of, the church of Christ. And thus here, *I could wish they were even cut off that trouble you*; 'I wish that, instead of having hearkened to these seducing teachers, they had been cut off

The PRACTICAL DOCTRINES and INFERENCES are such as these.

I. That it is the duty of all Christians to maintain the purity of the gospel faith and worship, and to oppose all attempts, by whomsoever they may be made, to corrupt the one, or introduce burthenfome ceremonies in the other, ver. 11. Some persons indeed would have you believe, that you are implicitly to obey those who have, or pretend to have, the rule over you, in all their articles of faith, and in their prescriptions for the order and decency of worship. But if the Apostle be a proper judge, Christians are not to obey any spiritual rulers, who pervert, or incumber, the doctrine and worship of Christ: If they design and seek to enslave the members of the Christian church, those members ought to refuse the yoke, and oppose the attempts of those, whosoever they be, that would put it on: They need not be afraid to tell them; 'Christ himself hath made us free. Who are you that would deprive us of our Christian freedom? We are commanded to stand fast in our liberty: And can you imagine that we will make a sacrifice of it to you? Shew us first as good a commission to warrant your attempts upon our liberty, as we can shew you for our firmly opposing them.' Such an opposition is the more necessary, because, as far as the doctrines of Christianity are corrupted, and men depend on any ceremonial observances for justification and pardon from God; so far Christianity becomes of no efficacy to them, and they fall from, or lose the hope of that pardon, which is the promise of the grace of God to all who sincerely believe the gospel.

II. The whole of Christianity consists in such a belief of the gospel of Christ, as effectually produces the fruits of love. Ceremonies are things of no use or value under the gospel dispensation, and they who lay any stress upon them, shew they understand not the nature of Christ's religion. The whole character of a Christian is completed in this; That he firmly believes the gospel of Christ, and in virtue of his faith abounds in the exercise of all those virtues, which are comprehended under the general term of Love: such a one is, and hath in him all the fundamentals of, a Christian; he possesseth every thing that is essentially necessary to constitute him a member of the Christian church, and entitle him to the gospel salvation. I am sensible that this is reducing Christianity to too narrow a compass, for the uses and conveniencies of many that profess it: They would have the modelling it themselves; they would have the directing of ceremonies, and the power of fixing essentials, and creating new fundamentals, as often as they see occasion; and they would have others blind, or think there was no occasion to dispute with, or oppose them: But surely Christianity is a stated, fixed thing, and its essentials plain enough for every Christian to understand them; and I cannot possibly think of more than two, viz. a firm and hearty persuasion of the truth of the gospel revelation, and that divine spirit of charity and love, which shews itself in all the ge-

by you, excluded from the church, and disowned as brethren:' This he commands the Christians to do with the incestuous person: *Purge out the old leaven. Keep no company with such a one: No not to eat*, 1 Cor. v. 7, 11. And when he here expresses his wish, that the troublers of the Galatians were cut off, it is only putting them in mind what would have been both their prudence and duty to have done; not to have hearkened to them, but to have disowned, and refused society with them as Christians. This being the plain and natural sense of the apostle's words, they cannot be charged with any ill-natured or unfriendly wish.

nuine

nuine fruits of piety and virtue. These are the persons, amongst all parties of Christians, who do the truest honour to Christianity, who are the genuine members of the Christian church, and who, though they may be rejected from the communion of particular churches, are sure to find acceptance with God, and to obtain the hope of righteousness by faith.

The apostle having in the former part of this chapter, exhorted the Galatian converts to maintain and adhere strictly to their Christian liberty, and never to submit to the yoke of the Jewish law; proceeds in this latter part of it to caution and guard them against the abuses of liberty, and particularly against that censorious, uncharitable, and unchristian spirit, which many of the Gentile converts seemed to have indulged; who not contented to enjoy their own liberty and freedom from the ceremonial law of Moses, were too ready to judge and despise the Jewish converts, because of their subjection to, and zeal for it; whilst the Jews, on the other hand, were as ready to condemn the Gentile converts for not conforming to the law of Moses.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

13 *For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use*

For whatever these Judaisers may pretend, you are absolutely freed by that gospel, (you have been called

Ver. 13. This advice relates to the two different parties of Christians in the church of Galatia; the Jewish and Gentile converts, of which almost all the primitive churches consisted. The apostle, exhorts the Gentile converts stedfastly to adhere to their liberty, and never to subject themselves to the law of Moses; and tells them, that if they were circumcised, Christ could profit them nothing; because they could not submit to circumcision upon any reason, but the believing it necessary to justification and acceptance, which was actually to renounce the Christian religion as sufficient of itself to salvation. But we never find St. Paul telling the Jews, that if they were circumcised they could not be saved; because they were circumcised as a nation, not properly upon a religious account, but as a political mark of distinction, whereby they were separated from all other nations of the earth; and therefore, though circumcision and obedience to the national law of Moses could not be of advantage so as to justify them before God, so neither could the use of it in obedience to the national constitution, prevent their justification or acceptance. Christianity left all nations in this respect as it found them; and was never intended to alter national constitutions, or the customs of countries, as far as they were indifferent or lawful. A Jew becoming a Christian, was not therefore obliged to live after the manner of the Gentiles; nor a Gentile convert to conform himself to the peculiar customs of a Jew; but each to remain in this respect in the circumstances in which the gospel found them; and, notwithstanding their mutual differences in these things, to bear with one another, and cultivate a sincere friendship, and brotherly love for each other: But contrary to this, these external differences between the Jewish and Gentile converts, occasioned too frequently very scandalous contentions, and raised a very bad unchristian spirit. The Jews gloried in being the posterity of Abraham, and in their national ceremonies, as what were of divine appointment and obligation, and treated the Gentile converts with contempt, censuring them also as incapable of salvation by Christ, for want of circumcision. The Gentile converts, on the other hand, censured and despised the Jewish converts for their bondage to the weak and beggarly elements of the law of Moses, and thus provoked them to anger and hatred, whereby the church of God became divided, and was in danger of being wholly destroyed. Nothing then could be a more wise and pertinent advice, than what the apostle gives them in the passage under consideration.

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.] He introduces his exhortation against licentiousness, with strongly asserting their Christian freedom, and would not have them to give up the point of liberty, because some might wickedly abuse it. "Ye are called unto liberty:" "the end of the gospel is to free

use not liberty, for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

15 *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

16 *This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*

17 *For*

For

free you from every yoke of superstition and ceremonies, and as Christians ye are no more subject to the law of Moses, than to the slavery of the idolatrous Gentile rites."

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.] Maintain your liberty, but do not abuse it, so as to turn it into an occasion of indulging your corrupt and carnal passions; such as pride, contention, contempt and hatred of one another. By the *flesh*, the apostle means those passions and affections, which are seated in the fleshly animal part of our constitution, and oppose the dictates of the spirit, which is the reason of mankind, under the influence of the spiritual and holy principles of the gospel religion; as the apostle declares in the verses following:

By love serve one another.] Though he asserts their freedom from the law of Moses, yet still he puts them in mind, they were not so free, but that they ought to be servants to one another, and to promote each other's interests under the influence of a fervent and unfeigned love. A man that is possessed of the most perfect liberty may serve, or be a slave to the dictates of love, nor can any one give a stronger proof, that he is not in an unmanly criminal bondage to his lusts and appetites, than by being devoted to a benevolent and friendly spirit.

Ver. 14. *In one word.*] Λόγος signifies a "sentence," and thus all that moral part of the law, which enjoins the practice of social virtue, is comprehended in, or may be reduced to this one sentence or general maxim; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: Because no one who is under the influence of this divine principle, can any more injure his neighbour, than himself, in his person, or character, or any valuable interest and concernment of life.

Ver. 15. *If ye bite and devour one another.*] The words are used metaphorically, (as they are by the best authors, Hom. Il. 1. V. 493.) to signify the contention, slander, backbiting, and censuring, that arose from the differences between the Jewish and Gentile converts. Such a conduct was not only contrary to the Christian spirit and character, but the most likely method to prejudice themselves, and destroy the church of Christ amongst them. For it could not but be a very great disadvantage to the gospel itself, and prevent the progress of it, when the first converts quarrelled amongst themselves, and manifested a bitter and angry spirit towards one another.

Ver. 16. *Walk in the spirit*, or, by the spirit.] By the *spirit* the apostle means, the reasonable principle, or soul in every man, which God hath given us to correct and govern the motions and tendencies of our fleshly appetites and passions. This I think is plain from the next verse, where he speaks of *the flesh*, as the contrary principle in man, *as lusting against the spirit*, or enticing

17 *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

18 *But if ye be led by the spirit, ye are not under the law.*

For the spirit and flesh are two opposite and contrary principles, which in their nature excite to quite different actions. The flesh, i. e. sense and appetite, excites to those things which the spirit, i. e. reason and the gospel condemn: And in like manner, the spirit excites to such things, as are contrary to the inclinations of the flesh, and thereby will prevent you, if you submit to it, from doing what sense and appetite would otherwise hurry you to the commission of.

And if ye are thus influenced by the reason of your minds, and the spiritual precepts of the gospel of Christ; ye can be under no obligations to observe that law, the ceremonies of which reach only to the flesh, because you will practise that righteousness which is the great design and requirement of the law.

19, 20 *Now*

Now

enticing men to such actions, as their reason and conscience condemn; and from that parallel place, Rom. vii. 22, 23. where he opposes *the law of the members*, to *the law of the mind*, or to *the inward man*, i. e. the appetites of the flesh or body, to the better dictates of the mind and conscience; and therefore "walking by the spirit," means living and acting according to the dictates of the reasonable mind informed and enlightened by the spiritual doctrines and precepts of the gospel of Christ. For he writes to them as Christians enjoying the benefit of the gospel revelation, and who, from a state of darkness and ignorance, had been brought to the knowledge of the true God, and the only acceptable religion, by Jesus Christ.

Ver. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit.*] i. e. the desires, inclinations, and tendencies of men's bodily appetites and passions lead them to such actions, as are oftentimes contrary to the sense and judgment of the reasonable and enlightened mind. And, on the other hand, reason and the principles of religion, the mind under the information and impression of the great truths of Christianity, teaches men to oppose the bias and correct the tendencies of their sensual appetites: and this opposition is so strong, that each principle in its turn prevails, so that ye do not the things ye desire to do. Sometimes appetite is too strong, and hurries men on, for want of consideration, to such actions, which they would not do had they suffered their reason and consciences to govern them. And at other times, when men are attentive to the voice of an enlightened conscience, they do not the things they would do, were they to listen to the impressions of sense, and submit to the influence of their fleshly appetites: And that the apostle hath respect to both these cases is, I think, very evident from the words, *These are contrary one to the other*; or, as they may be rendered, *They mutually oppose each other*; the consequence of which is, that men often do not the things they would, i. e. act sometimes by one of these principles, and sometimes by the other; in either of which cases they do not what they would, or what that principle, which they oppose, would lead them to do.

Ver. 18. *If ye are led by the spirit, ye are not under the law.* Εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ᾧγεθε.] "If ye are animated or influenced by the spirit; if ye cultivate that disposition, and abound in those fruits of righteousness, to which your reason and judgment, under the influence of the spirit and religion of Christ, lead you;" as appears from ver. 22. where he gives a particular account of the fruits of the spirit: If ye are thus acted by the spirit, *Ye are not under the law*; you can be under no obligation to conform to the rites and ceremonies of it, which extend only to the flesh; you will abundantly fulfil all that moral righteousness, which is the great design and tendency of the law; you will not need the ceremonial righteousness of the law for justification; since being thus acted by the spirit, you will be partakers of a more substantial and effectual righteousness, even that internal righteousness, which extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul, which produces all the fruits of genuine holiness in the life, is the effect of faith, and exhibits a natural and unalterable title to justification and acceptance with God.

Ver.

19, 20 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,* Now the vices to which men's sensual appetites excite them are evident and plain, viz. such as these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, poisoning and sorcery, mutual hatreds, contentions,

Ver. 19. *The works of the flesh are manifest.*] i. e. the actions and vices, to which men's corrupt appetites and passions lead them, are evidently these. They are the manifest and visible effects of men's hearkening to sense in opposition to reason, and being governed by their fleshly inclinations, contrary to the spirit and dictates of true religion: So that wherever these effects are visible, they are certain indications of that bad principle which produces them.

Ver. 20. *Witchcraft.*] The original word *φαρμακεία* sometimes denotes "poisonings," which were frequently practised amongst the heathens. Sometimes it signifies incantations, or magic arts, or witchcraft, by which impostors and cheats endeavoured to impose on ignorant and credulous people, and were carried on by poisonous intoxicating draughts and ointments, by which they did great mischief to the bodies of men. As it is here immediately placed next after Idolatry, I should imagine that the apostle intended those cursed arts of incantations and charms, those various methods of imposture and cheats, which were made use of by the heathen priests, to promote the idolatrous reverence and worship of their false gods. In this allusive and metaphorical sense, the word is certainly used in Rev. xviii. 23. where it is said of Babylon, "that by her forceries all nations were deceived," i. e. by her deceitful arts and wicked frauds, she as it were bewitched the nations to countenance and support her idolatries and corruptions.

Ibid. *Seditions, διχοστασίαι.*] The word signifies properly divisions and uncharitable separations amongst men; in which their minds are divided from, and set against each other; and is, I make no doubt, the same evil that, in other places, is called *schism*. This is evidently a work of the flesh, and proceeds from the influence of some prevalent sensual inclination and passion. In like manner also do,

Heresies,] or, as the word properly signifies, *sects*. And here it may not be amiss to say something of the nature of this crime. Heresy properly signifies a sect or party: Thus we read of *the heresy of the Sadducees, and Pharisees, and Nazarenes*; and indeed the word is never used in the New Testament, without including this in the notion of it: according to this general sense, the word heresy or sect is indifferently used in a good or bad sense: St. Paul tells Agrippa, *I lived a Pharisee, after the strictest sect of our religion*, Acts xxvi. 5. The most rigid and exact sect amongst the Jews were the Pharisees. Farther, as heresy signifies a sect, so it always includes in it difference of principle and practice: The sects or heresies of the Sadducees and Pharisees held quite opposite tenets, and used very different customs; and St. Peter speaking of false teachers, says, *They shall bring in destructive heresies, denying the Lord that bought them*, i. e. they shall form sects and parties upon the most impious and antichristian principles, 2 Pet. ii. 1. From hence it is evident, that whatever be the principles which men hold, whether good or bad, yet if they do not form parties upon those principles, there can be no heresy; heresy and party being synonymous terms: If a man keep his pernicious principles to himself, his bad principles may be very prejudicial to his own salvation, but do not constitute him guilty of scripture heresy. Farther, as an heresy and sect are the same thing, by consequence the being of, or belonging to, any heresy or sect, is not of itself criminal or blameworthy; it is not simply and in all circumstances a sin; for then all parties must be in their nature sinful, which is more than can be, or ought to be allowed: But then, if men divide into different sects and parties with a criminal disposition of mind, from the influence of vain-glory, with a censorious judging spirit, from ambition or envy, through contentions and strife, or the like sensual passions or inclinations, the effects of which are always visible, they are then guilty of heresy, whether the peculiar principles and rites they adopt, be in themselves indifferent, good, or evil, or whether they depart from the essentials of Christianity or not. Thus St. Paul to the Corinthians, *I hear there are schisms amongst you: and I partly believe it: and there must be also heresies amongst you, that they who are approved may be made manifest*, i. e. as these words stand in connection: *I hear there are schisms amongst you; though you as yet join and meet together for worship, yet you are uncharitably divided in your opinions, some being for Paul, some for Apollos, and some for Cephas; and therefore there must be, the necessary consequence of these divisions will be, your going farther, separating from each other, and dividing into different parties and sects: The having a particular affection for Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, was not the thing that was criminal; but when they quarrelled, or contended with, or censured one another, because all had not the same respect for the same person that the others*

ness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22, 23 But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And

tentions, ambitious emulations, passionate anger, abusive quarrellings, uncharitable divisions, heresies, or separating into sects, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, gluttonies, and such like crimes.

Concerning all these vices and others like them, I now forewarn you again, as I have before, that they who allow themselves in the habitual practice of these crimes, shall never inherit the future kingdom of God.

But now on the contrary, the virtues, to which the reason of men's minds, and the spiritual nature of the gospel excite and influence them, are such as these; benevolence or charity, joy at the happiness of others, the love of peace and study to promote it, patience under provocations and injuries, sweetness of

others had, this made them guilty of schism, even whilst they worshipped together in one assembly; but when these divisions proceeded farther, and arrived at such an height, as to cause them to separate communions, and divide into parties under separate heads and leaders, this made them guilty both of heresy and schism; and plainly made it appear, that this heresy was a work of the flesh, or owing to the influence of some sensual and criminal passion that governed them, even though they none of them espoused any principles opposite to Christianity; for we cannot suppose that either Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, taught any pernicious and destructive doctrines. So that uncharitable, contentious separations from the communion of Christians, and engaging in different parties with such a spirit, though it be not upon the foundation of any false tenets, and even though the things that cause these separations should be as indifferent as circumcision and uncircumcision, is scripture heresy. And farther, when any persons, out of the same vain-glorious and contentious spirit, formed parties and sects in the Christian church, upon false and wicked principles, principles destructive of the Christian doctrine and morality, they were in the worst sense guilty of the sin of heresy. According to that of St. Peter, already cited, *There shall be false teachers amongst you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, 'raise sects amongst you upon destructive principles,' denying the Lord that bought them: and many shall follow their pernicious ways, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you.* Now put together these marks of heresy, and you will not be at a loss to know the nature of it. 1st, It is making sects in the Christian church; *Many shall follow their pernicious ways, and they shall with feigned words make merchandize of you.* 2. These sects were raised upon antichristian principles, *They deny the Lord that bought them.* 3. They were raised with very corrupt and carnal motives; *Through covetousness shall they make merchandize of you.* And to this account agrees the celebrated description of an heretic by St. Paul, Tit. iii. 10. *An heretical man reject after the first and second admonition, i. e. disown as a Christian, the man that raises and enters into heresies or sects in the Christian church, after you have once and again admonished him, Knowing that such a one is subverted; the word properly signifies, is wholly altered and changed from what he was; he is no longer a Christian, ἀμαρτάνει; he sinneth, viz. either by renouncing his Christian principles, and contentiously separating from the church of God, being self-condemned, by his own contentious conduct and behaviour, and by acting on mean, vile, unworthy carnal motives; principles of vain-glory, ambition, and covetousness. A man is self-condemned either by his actions, or by his conscience: he is self-condemned by his actions, when those actions are contrary to righteousness and truth; and he is condemned in his own conscience, for the same reason, or when he acts upon sordid, selfish principles, and forms parties in the Christian church merely for the sake of a name, reputation, or worldly advantage, or through the dictates of envy, hatred, or malice: by either of these marks an heretic may be known, and ought, when known, to be avoided. I shall only add, that no sincere, upright, honest man can possibly be a scripture heretic; and therefore he may scorn the charge of heresy, when thrown on him by peevish, ill-natured, passionate, and selfish men, without reason, or contrary to scripture.*

of conversation, goodness of disposition, fidelity and constancy in the profession of the true faith, gentleness of spirit, and universal temperance in meats and drinks; the law itself doth not prohibit, but rather encourages the practice of these virtues.

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

Much more are we obliged, as Christians, to abound in the exercise of them, and to subdue and extinguish all our fleshly passions and appetites.

25. *If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.*

For, as Christians, we profess to govern ourselves, not by sense and appetite, but by the principles of reason and the gospel; and should therefore look upon our selves as under the strongest engagements to govern our whole behaviour in obedience to them.

26. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

And as nothing is more contrary to either, than a proud, vain-glorious spirit, let us be careful that we do not indulge to so mischievous a temper; nor provoke one another either by insolent boasts of our Christian liberty, or by censuring others for the use of it; nor envy one another upon account of any superior advantages and abilities, with which the providence of God may have favoured us.

REMARKS.

There are many practical uses to be drawn from this portion of holy scripture.

I. That all indulgence given to vice, upon a pretence of asserting our Christian liberty, is not true liberty, but a scandalous abuse of it.

II. That all Christians, notwithstanding their freedom as the children of God, are under immutable obligations to all the duties and services of mutual love: Yea, their being constituted free by the grace of the gospel, strengthens their engagements to brotherly affection and charity, ver. 13.

III. That to love our neighbour as ourselves, is the summary of the moral law, and the great point that God intended to promote by the law of Moses, ver. 14.

IV. That the divisions, and uncharitable contentions of those who profess themselves Christians, are greatly disserviceable to the Christian cause, and oftentimes prove fatal to Christians themselves, ver. 15.

V. That a strict adherence to the dictates of our reason and consciences, under the influence of the principles of the Christian religion, will effectually prevent men's gratifying their corrupt affections and passions, ver. 16.

VI. That the two great opposite principles in every man, which are continually opposing each other, and striving to bring us under their influence and govern-

Ver. 25. *If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.* It should be rendered, *If we live by the spirit,* 'if we profess our selves under obligations as Christians to live by the influence of our reason and minds,' *let us also walk by the spirit,* 'shew that this is the principle that governs us, by conforming our whole behaviour according to it.'

ment,

ment, are the flesh and spirit; men's senses or their bodily appetites and passions on one hand, and their consciences under the conduct of Divine revelation, on the other, ver. 17.

VII. That he who governs his whole conduct by the dictates of reason, and the principles of revelation, can be under obligations to no other law, nor needs any other assurance of being justified and accepted with God, ver. 18.

VIII. That there are certain actions which are evident and demonstrative proofs, that men are not governed by reason and religion, but by their fleshly appetites, and corrupt passions and affections.

IX. That all the works of the flesh, or the habitual indulgence of any of our corrupt affections, and fleshly appetites; and particularly all kinds of uncleanness, idolatry, all uncharitable, envious, malicious contentions, all drunkenness, and intemperate revellings, are inconsistent with the hopes of the Christian salvation, ver. 21.

X. That the dictates of reason followed, and the principles of revelation submitted to, never fail to produce the divine and amiable fruits of love, &c. verses 22, 23.

XI. That it is essential to the character of a Christian, to mortify and subdue the corrupt affections and passions of his animal nature, ver. 24.

XII. That it is incumbent on all, who profess to govern themselves by reason and revelation, ever to act agreeably to the direction of these sacred principles, ver. 25.

XIII. That vain ostentation, the immoderate love of human applause, an envious spirit, and a disposition to provoke others, and render them uneasy by uncharitable censures, or unjust insinuations of their principles and views, are very unsuitable to the spirit and obligations of true Christianity, ver. 26. And finally,

XIV. That heresy is a visible and evident work of the flesh; a vice that hath as certain and plain marks to discover it as uncleanness, idolatry, contention, revelling, drunkenness, and other open and notorious crimes; it is placed here amongst such sins, and therefore must be equally manifest with any of them.

In the following chapter the apostle continues his exhortation to forbearance and love, and presses on the Galatians these duties, by several arguments of great importance and weight. The first thing under this general character is, that of tenderness towards offending Christians, and a careful endeavour to recover them, by a gentle behaviour, to a sense of their error, and a more Christian conduct for the future.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

C H A P. VI.

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are

But if any person, brethren, should be found to act contrary to these rules, and be surprised into any sin, through the influence of his sensual passions and appetites;

Ver. 1. *If a man be overtaken in a fault.*] In the original it is *εν τινι παραπτώματι* in any fault; the expression is general, though it seems to refer to those works of the flesh, of which he had made

are spiritual restore such a one, in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 *Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

3 *For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

4 *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he*

petites; do you, in whom reason and religion are stronger principles, endeavour every one of you to heal and restore such a one in a meek and gentle manner; carefully observing thyself, that thou mayest prevent the danger and success of temptation.

Instead of treating such a one with severity and contempt, learn rather to compassionate and support one another under your failings, and so fulfil the law of love, which is the distinguishing law of Christ's religion.

And therefore whosoever is void of this amiable disposition, he wants the characteristic of a true Christian; and whilst he is destitute of this virtue, he is of no account in the sight of God, and consequently deceives himself by glorying in, and trusting to, any thing else without it.

Instead therefore of censuring others for their infirmities, let every man be careful of his own behaviour,

mention in the nineteenth and following verses of the foregoing chapter: 'If in any of those faults any person should happen to be overtaken;' the last word seems to denote somewhat of a surprise, by which a man might be drawn into a sin, without any previous deliberate purpose or design; a sin committed through some extraordinary and sudden temptation; the last words of the verse, *lest thou also be tempted*, seem plainly to intimate, that this was the apostle's meaning.

Ye who are spiritual restore such a one.] The original word, rendered, *restore*, properly signifies to reduce and recover any thing to its former and original state of perfection. Thus the apostle exhorts the Corinthians, who were divided into parties and factions, that there should be no divisions amongst them, but that they would recover themselves to their former unity and agreement, by being of one mind and one judgment, 1 Cor. i. 10. And thus in the place before us, the "restoring" the offender signifies, the bringing him to repentance and reformation, that hereby his cure might be perfected, and he recovered to the privileges of the church, and the hopes of salvation.

And this they were to endeavour to do who were *spiritual*. Some explain this of church governors; but it is a sufficient answer hereto, that the governors of the church are never distinguished in the New Testament by this character of spiritual; a spiritual person in the New Testament, is either one who is endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; as 1 Cor. xiv. 37. *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual*; or else it signifies one, who, as the apostle expresses it, Rom. viii. 6. *is spiritually minded*, who is according to the spirit, or hath a truly spiritual disposition and affection, i. e. one who forms his temper, and governs his behaviour, according to the religion of Christ, the great evidence and confirmation of which was, the Spirit in all his extraordinary and miraculous gifts. And this seems to be the plain sense of the word, in the passage before us, where the "spiritual man" is opposed to him that "is overtaken in a fault," or hath done any of the works of the flesh; and consequently must mean a person who, under the influence of the principles of Christianity, leads a divine and spiritual life, i. e. abounds in those fruits of the Spirit, which he had expressly mentioned a little before. And thus the duty refers to all Christians, who by that love which they owe to all men, and especially their Christian brethren, are obliged to do all that they can to recover to repentance and reformation, by a meek and gentle behaviour those who may have been surprised by any temptation; especially considering that they also may be tempted, i. e. prevailed upon by temptation, so as to be drawn into the same errors and sins.

Ver. 4. *Let every man prove his own work.*] The original word signifies so to examine and inquire into any thing, as to approve it. And thus in the place before us, 'let a man be careful of his own actions, so that when he examines them, he may approve them to God and his own conscience; and then he will have abundant reason to rejoice in and from himself only, without any need of the commendations of others to support and comfort him.'

Ver.

he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 *For every man shall bear his own burthen.*

6 *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

7 *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

8 *For he that soweth to his*

viour, so that he may approve his actions to God and his own conscience; and thus he will have solid ground of pleasure in and from himself, which is much better than the vain applause and commendation of others.

For the judgment of others concerning us is of no weight with God, who will judge every man according to his own works, and hereafter cause him to reap the consequences of his own actions.

And as a farther evidence of the Christian love, let those of you who are instructed in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, make the proper returns of gratitude to those who are your instructors, by abounding towards them in all the instances of friendship and support.

And here, let no one deceive himself, by thinking himself excused from this service; for as God hath made this the common duty of Christians, he will not suffer himself to be deceived and mocked, by men's pretending to the Christian name, whilst they are defective in the essential works of Christian charity. What a man soweth, that shall he reap; his future recompence shall be suitable to his works, whether good or evil.

He who abuses his riches to the gratification of his

Ver. 5. *Every man shall bear his own burthen.*] In the second verse the apostle exhorts them to *bear one another's burthens*, i. e. to treat with gentleness, and endeavour the recovery of such Christians, as through surprise may have been drawn into sin. In this verse he tells them, *every man shall bear his own burthen*, i. e. be answerable for his own actions, viz. before God, who will not regard the commendations or applauses of men, but impartially pass the proper sentence on every man, according to the nature of his doings, whether they shall have been good or evil.

Ver. 6. This is another instance of that love, which is the peculiar law of Christ, viz. that all *who are taught in the word*, i. e. instructed in the principles and duties of Christianity, should *communicate in all good things*, i. e. shew a proper esteem and respect to, and contribute to the support and maintenance of *those who instruct them*. And the exhortation is founded upon this rule of equity and gratitude, that benefits conferred deserve suitable returns. However it is not any where written or commanded, that we ought to communicate our good things to men who never instruct us, or who instruct us only at second-hand by their deputies and curates.

Ver. 8. We may observe from this and the foregoing verse, that the maintenance of the preachers of the gospel, was in the primitive church by the voluntary contributions of the Christian people; and that the divine right of tythes was a doctrine much later than the times of the apostles. Such contributions as these, with other works of charity like them, the apostle compares to sowing, which was an usual method of speaking amongst the Jews, and indeed a very just and significant similitude; because as the harvest reaped must be in proportion to the seed sown, so will men's future recompence be agreeable to the nature and measure of their actions. If they *sow to the flesh*, i. e. employ what they have of this world's good things, to the gratifying any corrupt passions and appetites; *they shall of the flesh reap corruption*, or death, just as a man reaps an harvest of the same kind of fruit or grain that he sows. And in like manner *he that sows to the spirit*, i. e. distributes with a willing and generous mind in works of mercy and goodness, as the principles of true reason and religion direct him; *he shall of the spirit reap life everlasting*, i. e. in consequence, and as the reward of this rational and pious use of the riches which God hath given him. And thus the exhortation in the next verse follows with great propriety.

Ver.

his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

his sensual appetites and fleshly lusts, shall reap that destruction and death which is the genuine effect of such sensual indulgences; but he who, in obedience to the dictates of reason and Christianity, employs what he hath in works of charity and mercy, he shall obtain that life eternal, which is the glorious effect and reward of so wise and useful a behaviour.

9 *And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*

Let us then go on in doing good, without growing weary or tired of the work; for we shall reap this blessed harvest, if we persevere to the end without fainting.

10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them, who are of the household of faith.*

Let us therefore be as generally useful as we can; and, as opportunity offers, extend our goodness to all men without exception; but more especially to such, who are of God's family and household by faith.

11 *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you, with my own hand.*

And as I have written this whole large epistle to you with my own hand, without employing an amanuensis as I used to do; you will esteem it as an

12 *As*

argument

Ver. 10. How generous is the spirit which Christianity inspires! *As we have opportunity let us do good to all men*; none that need our assistance are to be excluded from it, when it is in our power to give it: And yet how wise and just is the limitation here fixed by the apostle! *But especially to the household of faith.* Nature teaches men to provide in the first place for their household and family; and reason instructs them, to regard the most worthy objects of charity, in their first and largest distributions. And both these reasons concur, to direct the Christian to do good, especially to the household of faith; since as Christians, all men are children of the same heavenly Father, of the same household and family; and because he who is truly a Christian in temper and behaviour, is the most worthy object of relief under difficulties that can be mentioned, and therefore, upon all just principles of affection, reason, and revelation, hath the first and strongest claim to our assistance and support.

Ver. 11. *Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand.*] Grotius imagines that these words do not refer to the whole epistle, but only to what follows from this verse to the end of it: But I think this a mere conjecture that hath nothing to support it; nor can I think that if the apostle had written no more than these few last verses with his own hand, he would have taken such particular notice of it. It is certain that St. Paul often used an amanuensis in writing his letters, signing them only with his own hand; but to the Galatians he himself wrote the whole epistle. And therefore he calls on them to observe it: *Ye see*; or, as the word may be rendered, *see*, consider it. For this was a mark of particular esteem and respect, and probably necessary in the case of the Galatians: some amongst them had charged the apostle with teaching the necessity of circumcision himself; and therefore, as he intended to refute this insinuation, and at the same time fully to establish the sufficiency of Christianity to the justification and acceptance of all that believed it, without any conformity to the law of Moses, he writes the whole epistle, that so his sentiments might appear under his own hand, and the Judaizing Christians might have nothing to object against the genuineness of the whole letter. The words indeed which we render, *how large a letter*, will bear a different rendering, and which appears to me to be the true one. Γραμματα in profane writers, signifies [Ælian. V. H. 8. 6. 7. 15.] the same as we mean by letters, when we say of any person, he 'is a man of letters,' i. e. 'one who understands the principles of learning.' And therefore as these words are thus brought in at the end of his letter, they seem to be used to put the Galatians in mind of the nature of the doctrine he had been teaching them, and of the regard he would have them pay to it, since the whole letter was written with his own hand: And they may be rendered, 'Observe, in what kind of words I have written to you, and what the doctrine I have set before you in this letter; which, that you may be assured it is my doctrine, I have written all with my own hand.' And thus it will be a very just introduction of what follows.

12 *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*

13 *For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.*

14 *But God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

argument of my great respect and concern for you, and of my earnest desire to establish you in the faith and practice of the gospel.

And indeed the sufferings I am continually exposed to, upon account of the gospel I preach, are an abundant evidence of my sincerity. Whereas those amongst you who would appear specious and gain a reputation by the flesh, they are perpetually pressing and forcing you to be circumcised, only that they may escape sufferings and persecution for the sake of Christ.

For it is an evident argument of their insincerity in this respect, that the very persons, who are themselves circumcised, and thereby under obligations to observe the whole law of Moses, yet do not observe and conform to it; and therefore their pressing you to submit to circumcision, cannot proceed from any conviction of the necessity of it, but only that they may boast and make a merit of it with the Jews, and thereby save themselves from the trouble and danger of persecution.

But God forbid, that I should glory or value myself on any thing, but the plain uncorrupted doctrine of salvation by a crucified Saviour, which I believe and teach; by which I have learned to despise these corrupt practices of temporising men, and that worldly profit and ease in which they place their happiness; and for the sake of which I am despised myself, and undergo the most grievous sufferings and afflictions.

15 *For*

For

Ver. 12. *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh.*] The word we render, *to make a fair shew*, properly signifies to be handsome and lovely. Hence it is used to signify any thing that recommends itself by its specious appearance. [Thus *απολογία ευπροσωπος*, apud Lucian. V. I. p. 486.] Now this was the case of these Judaizing teachers: Their great care was to avoid persecution; and in order to this, they made it their study *ευπροσωπῆσαι* to keep fair with the Jews, *εν σαρκι* by means of the flesh, i. e. not only by boasting of their own circumcision, but by making it a point of merit with them, that they had pressed the necessity of circumcision upon others. That this is the meaning of *in or by the flesh*, is abundantly evident by the next verse; in which the apostle adds, *they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in or by means of your flesh*, you being circumcised through their persuasion.

Ver. 14. The apostle's *glorying in the cross of Christ*, is evidently opposed to these Judaizers glorying in circumcision; and therefore doth not mean what Grotius, and other expositors think, glorying in his sufferings for Christ, figuratively called the *cross of Christ*: But adhering to, and glorying in, the plain unmixed doctrine of justification and salvation by a crucified Saviour, whatever persecutions he might suffer upon account of it; as appears from the following words.

Ibid. *By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*] By means of which doctrine, the world was of no more account to him, he valued the applauses of men, and the riches and pleasures of the world, no more than a dead body hanging upon a cross; and by means of which he was crucified to the world, of no more esteem with worldly men, than that loathsome and wretched spectacle. Such was the mutual contempt between this blessed apostle and the world.

Ver.

15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

For let them boast as they will of being circumcised themselves, and of persuading others to be circumcised, yet this is a certain and unalterable truth, that under the Christian dispensation, circumcision cannot be of any avail to justification and acceptance with God, nor the want of it any hinderance to men's being interested in this blessedness. The sum and substance of the gospel religion is purity of heart, and universal virtue and holiness of life.

16 *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and upon the Israel of God.*

And therefore whosoever they be that govern themselves by, and conform to this rule, whether Jews or Gentiles, may they enjoy all the invaluable effects of the Divine favour and mercy! for these only are genuine Israelites, the true seed of Abraham, in the account of God, and heirs of the blessedness according to promise.

17 *From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in*

Finally, let no man from henceforth occasion me any farther trouble, by questioning my apostolic character

Ver. 16. *As many as walk according to this rule.*] The word *κατα* here used, denotes amongst profane writers, a rule by which persons govern their sentiments and lives. And therefore the meaning of the apostle is, That whosoever they be, whether Jews or Gentiles, who believe that Christianity lays no stress upon external, ritual, ceremonial righteousness, but that the great obligation of it is purity of heart, and holiness of life; and who, in consequence of this belief, form themselves into that holy disposition, and newness of obedience which Christianity requires; peace be on them and mercy! (by way of wish and prayer;) or peace and mercy shall be on them (by way of promise and assurance:) the words being capable of each construction; they shall enjoy all the effects of the Divine favour and mercy.

Ibid. *And upon the Israel of God.*] "Peace be on them and upon the Israel of God:" I think it should be rendered, "Even upon the whole Israel of God." Such persons as these are the true Israel, the true seed of Abraham according to the promise, and consequently entitled to the blessedness of justification by faith. And thus he closes his epistle with that great principle, in defence and for the proof of which he wrote the whole letter. He only farther adds:

Ver. 17. *From henceforth let no man trouble me,* *Τὸ λοιπὸν*.] 'From this time forward, since I have thus given you full proof of my apostleship, and have thus abundantly confirmed the truth of the doctrine I have been inculcating, let no one amongst you give me any farther uneasiness, either by questioning my character, or opposing this great and essential truth of Christianity.' I should think, that the apostle in these words, softly conveys some threatening to these Judaizing teachers; and intimates that he would inflict some spiritual punishment on them, if they proceeded to any farther aspersions of his character, or opposition of his doctrine, according to the power he had, not for destruction, but for edification. As though he had said, 'Be it at their peril to give me any farther trouble or disturbance on this account.' Adding,

Ibid. *For I bear in my body the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ.*] 'They glory in the circumcision of the flesh, that distinguishing mark of the Jewish nation: but I have nobler marks on my body; marks impressed on me by the stripes and scourges, and other persecutions I have endured for the sake of Christ;' or possibly the apostle may refer to what he mentions, Chap. IV. v. 13, 14. his *infirmity and temptation in the flesh*, viz. that languor and weakness of nerves, which probably occasioned some faltering and stammering in his speech, which came on his body by the abundance and glory of his revelations; which were indeed visible marks of his apostolic character, and that he acted by an immediate commission from Christ. The word *σημα*, from whence comes the English word, *stigmatise*, or to set a mark upon, properly signifies, that mark which was imprinted on the hands of the soldiers, when they were enlisted, and had their names entered into the military roll; this mark was commonly the Emperor's name under whom they fought. And thus our apostle had those marks or notes imprinted on him, either by his sufferings for Christ, or through the number and greatness of

in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

racter and mission: I have sufficiently proved it to you, and if all other proofs were wanting, yet the marks that have been impressed on my body by the stripes and scourges I have endured for the sake of Christ, sufficiently discover whose I am, that I am engaged in his cause, and absolutely devoted to his service.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

May the favour and blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, refresh, and comfort, and support your minds! Amen.

The PRACTICAL TRUTHS in this Chapter, are

- I. That even good men may be surprised by temptation into sin.
- II. That such must be recovered and restored by a true repentance.
- III. That it is every Christian's duty to endeavour the recovery of offending brethren.
- IV. That great tenderness and meekness is the most effectual way to recover them.
- V. That every one ought to be upon his guard, that he be not surprised by temptation.
- VI. That we ought to pity and compassionate our fellow Christians under their failings, and that this is a noble instance of Christian love, verses 1, 2.
- VII. That if men have a better opinion of themselves than they really deserve, they only deceive themselves, and can reap no advantage by it, ver. 3.
- VIII. That the testimony of a good conscience is a noble ground of inward joy, ver. 4.
- IX. That every man shall reap the consequence of his own actions, verses 5, 7, 8.
- X. That the preachers of the gospel ought to be supported by those who attend on their ministrations, ver. 6.
- XI. That though men may excuse themselves from plain duty by pretended reasons, yet they cannot impose on or deceive the great God, ver. 7.
- XII. That eternal death shall be the wages of corrupt indulgences, and everlasting life the sure reward of Christian virtue and goodness, ver. 8.
- XIII. That the consideration of this blessed reward should make us steadfast, and unwearied in all the instances of benevolence and charity, ver. 9.
- XIV. That a Christian's goodness should extend itself to all men without exception, as far as they have opportunity.
- XV. That the household of faith, all sincere and pious Christians deserve our first regard, and should be the principal objects of our charity, ver. 10.

of the revelations he had received from him, as made it abundantly appear under what General he was enlisted, and by what power he was able to support himself, against all the reproaches and attempts of those who endeavoured to corrupt the simplicity of the gospel. However he ends his letter with a blessing.

Ver. 18. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*] i. e. may all those spiritual blessings, which are the effect of the love and favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, enrich your minds, and preserve you steadfast and immovable in the profession of his gospel!—

L

XVI. That

XVI. That the ministers of the gospel should lay no stress on, nor ever value themselves upon any ceremonial observances, but count it their glory to preach the uncorrupted doctrine of salvation by a crucified Saviour.

XVII. That the consideration of the gospel doctrine, seriously attended to, will create in men a becoming indifference, towards all worldly enjoyments and blessings, ver. 14.

XVIII. That the repentance and reformation of sinners, is the great design of the gospel revelation, and the sum and substance of genuine Christianity.

XIX. That the favour and mercy of God shall be the sure portion of those, who place no dependance on ceremonial observances, but labour after that purity of heart and holiness of life, which is the main end of the Christian religion, and the only means of preparing us for the reward of eternal life. And finally

XX. That the grace and favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a blessing to be prayed for, as necessary to our obtaining all spiritual benefits, and to the sanctification, comfort, and establishment of our minds. For him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins; in him it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell, that we from him might receive mercy and grace to help us in time of need. And therefore that your souls may prosper in knowledge, piety, and virtue; my prayer and earnest desire is, That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you all. AMEN.

I have now gone through this excellent epistle, which was written in defence of the purity of the Christian religion, and in maintenance of the liberty of all Christians from the yoke of ceremonies, under which some Judaizers would have enslaved them. And there is this argument or intrinsic demonstration of its antiquity and genuineness upon the very face of it, which must silence almost any objection that can be raised against it, viz. the very nature of the question itself here debated and settled by the apostle, which must have been peculiar to the very first appearance of Christianity in the world, and could be no other than what this epistle represents it, as, whether the observation of the law of Moses was necessary to men's acceptance and justification before God, after they had embraced the Christian religion. It was natural for the Jews to imagine and inculcate such a necessity, who had been bred up in a zealous concern for this law; and to press it immediately upon the preaching the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Saviour. And accordingly this was the first contest in the Christian church; but as the progress of this notion must have put a stop to the progress of Christianity, and was indeed a very absurd notion in itself, it was necessary the controversy should be decided by the authority of an apostle. St. Paul did actually decide it in this and several other epistles, upon which it soon died of itself, and created no farther disturbance in the Christian church. And had such an epistle as this been written in the second or third century, it would have been a very needless and impertinent labour, since at this time there was no controversy of this nature that wanted to be decided.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

A P A R A-

A
PARAPHRASE AND NOTES
ON
The EPISTLE of St. PAUL
TO THE
EPHESIANS,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

PARAPHRASE AND NOTES
ON
THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
EPHESIANS
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

PARAPHRASE AND NOTES

ON

The EPISTLE of St. PAUL to the EPHESIANS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

EPHESUS was a large and populous city, the metropolis of Asia Minor, famous for its trade and riches. It was extremely given to idolatry, and had in it the famous temple of Diana, and an image which was pretended to have fallen down from Jupiter. In this city there were great numbers of Jews, who had settled there for the advantage of trading; and here St. Paul first preached the gospel, and laid the first foundation of the Christian church amongst them, as is expressly related by St. Luke, Acts xix. 4. In this place the apostle continued three years, as he himself tells them, Acts xx. 31. and when he took his final leave of them at Miletus, he warns the bishops or ministers in that city, that after his departure from them, grievous wolves would enter in amongst them not sparing the flock, and that of themselves should men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them, verses 29, 30.

For this reason, or because he had heard of some attempts to corrupt them, he writes to them this epistle from Rome, where he was in bonds and imprisonment for the sake of Christ, about the year of our Lord sixty-two. And that it was written to the Ephesians, the inscription and salutation to the epistle itself bears witness, and this Tertullian confirms; nor indeed is there any authentic evidence from antiquity, that should lead us to apprehend the contrary.

There are indeed several persons of good learning, who imagine that this epistle was inscribed, not to the Ephesians, but to the Laodiceans, of which
mention

mention is expressly made, Colof. iv. 16. and they think this may be made evident from several passages in the epistle; but I think their arguments not conclusive, as I shall endeavour to shew, when I come to the passages on which they ground their opinion. However, it is not material to whom the epistle was inscribed, whether to the Ephesians or Laodiceans, since the authority of the epistle doth not depend on the persons to whom it was written, but on the person that indited it, who was St. Paul, as the letter itself testifies, and all genuine antiquity confirms.

In the epistle itself there are two main parts.

1. An account of the eternal purpose of God, in calling the Gentiles out of a state of great corruption and idolatry, to the participation of the benefits of redemption by Christ, contained in the three first chapters.

2. An exhortation to the great duties of the Christian life, suited to the state and circumstances of the Ephesians to whom the epistle was written, contained in the three last chapters. The inscription and salutation we have in the two first verses.

C H A P. I.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

I PAUL an apostle of
Jesus Christ by the
will of God, to the saints
which

I PAUL, who am an apostle of Jesus Christ by
the will and immediate appointment of God
himself, send greeting to the Christians of the city
of

Ver. 1. *Paul an apostle by the will of God.*] He asserts his divine mission and character at the beginning of his letter, that the doctrine he delivered in it might carry the greater authority and weight. He was an apostle by the will of God, not by the designation, appointment, or instruction of any mortal man, but by the immediate call, and special appointment of God himself: he had both the authority and furniture of an apostle directly from him.

To the saints who are at Ephesus.] Thus all the MS. copies, and versions, that are now extant, read it. And Tertullian, who lived in the second and third centuries, affirms, that it was the real tradition of the church, that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians. Nor would there, I believe, have been any doubt of this matter, had it not been for an obscure passage in St. Basil; but as he lived much later than Tertullian, his testimony must be of much less weight; especially as all the MSS. and versions confirm Tertullian's assertion, that this epistle was directed to the Ephesians.

The opinion which some learned men have embraced, is I think without foundation, viz. That St. Paul designed this as a circular letter to the cities bordering on Ephesus, as well as to Ephesus itself, and that he only directed it, "Paul an apostle by the will of God, to the saints at ——" leaving a blank to be filled up, according as the bearer of it should deliver a copy thereof to any particular church. This opinion seems to be wholly without foundation, and contrary to St. Paul's constant method of inscribing his epistles, which was always to particular places; even when they were designed for general instruction, as may be seen in the two epistles to the Corinthians. It is also worthy of consideration, that Ephesus was the metropolis of Asia Minor, that St. Paul taught there for three years, that he gave the bishops or pastors of that church a solemn charge at his final parting from them, and forewarned them that grievous wolves would enter amongst them after his departure; and therefore it is reasonable to think, that he would afterwards warn them to steadfastness by a letter. And as the present reading of our bibles hath the testimony of the ancient church, and all the MSS. and versions to confirm it, we ought to receive and acquiesce therein.

He styles these Ephesians, *saints*. This is a name he gives in common to all Christians; not designing hereby to affirm, that all he wrote to were really such, but to denote the end of their calling, and the obligation of their Christian profession. For all Christians are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and we are called with an holy vocation; and this the apostle seems more distinctly

which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. of Ephesus, converted to, and continuing stedfast in, the holy faith of the gospel of Christ.

2 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Wishing you favour and all manner of happiness from God our Father, the supreme fountain of all good; and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the common Saviour of mankind.

3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* In the first place, blessed be God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us Gen- tiles

tinely to express in his epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, which he inscribes *κλητοις αγιοις*. To those called to be saints, who were sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. i. 2. as they had taken upon them the profession of his holy religion, and thereby professed themselves to be separate and distinct from the rest of mankind.

This is abundantly evident from the state of the Corinthians. He directs his epistle to them thus, *To the church of God at Corinth*, i. e. to all that professed the Christian religion; to them *that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*. Now it is evident that there were many in that church, who were persons of very evil dispositions and behaviour; persons of quarrelling, schismatical, and factious spirits, who abused even the Lord's supper to intemperance and drunkenness, and were guilty of many other great irregularities: and yet even these, by their visible profession were part of that church, and were comprehended under the general title of the *sanctified in Christ Jesus, and the saints*; because such they ought to have been, and because for this purpose they were called to the knowledge of the gospel of Christ. So that under this title of saints, were comprehended all who professed to believe the Christian religion, and were the visible members of those particular congregations, to whom the apostle wrote.

I would only farther observe, for the explication of this character of saints, that it was a title given to the whole Jewish nation. *Ye shall be to me, faith God, an holy nation*, Exod. xix. 6. And Moses tells them, *Thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God*, Deut. vii. 6. which he immediately explains, *The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*; so that to be holy or saints, is to be separated by the call of God from other people, and to be favoured with peculiar privileges. Now this title, in which the Jews gloried, is here by the apostle given to Christians, who were called to the knowledge of the gospel, favoured with special blessings, and so separated from the rest of mankind, as to be constituted his *peculiar people*, that they might be *zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. This is the primary meaning of the word *saints*, and in this respect the Gentiles, who believed in Christ, were as truly an holy nation, or the saints of God, as ever the Jews themselves were. It follows

And to the faithful in Christ Jesus.] This is explicative of the former character of saints, viz. such who adhered to, and continued stedfast in the profession of the Christian faith and religion.

Ver. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*] The words may be rendered, *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This seems the more natural rendering, though the sense will be the same as in our version; "Blessed be that glorious Being, who is both the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings,] or, as it is in the original, *with every spiritual blessing*; the expression may refer to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, of which he unquestionably speaks, ver. 13. where he saith they were *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*; or to the great and invaluable benefits of redemption by Christ, of which he frequently makes mention in this epistle. Probably the apostle intended to denote by this expression both of them, which they received only through Christ.

In heavenly places in Christ.] Various are the interpretations which expositors give of these words. In the margin of our bibles, our translators have put *things*; the word *heavenly* being capable of being joined to *things* as well as *places*. It is unquestionably one of the difficult passages of scripture: The best account I can give of it is this; in the twentieth verse of this chapter, the apostle tells us, *That God raised up Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, ev τοις επεραντοις*, in *heavenly places*, in those regions of happiness and glory, which are the proper habitation of the heavenly principalities and powers; as we have it Eph. iii. 10. And the apostle farther tells us, Eph. ii. 6. *That God hath quickened us with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places through Christ*. Now this is spoken in opposition to what was said before, concerning the state of the Gentiles, viz. that they were *dead in trespasses and sins, and that in times past they walked ac-* cording

Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

tiles through him, with all the extraordinary gifts of his Holy Spirit, and the invaluable benefits of redemption; blessings of a divine and heavenly nature, and which argue the great dignity of our character and condition as Christians.

4 *According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation*

These blessings we have received from him, in pursuance and as the effect of that kind and gracious choice,

according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, amongst whom they had their conversation in times past. The difference then in their state as Gentiles, and converted Christians was this: When Gentiles, they were dead in trespasses and sins; as converted Christians they were quickened together with Christ, as being justified from their past sins, and restored to a new and spiritual life: as Gentiles, they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, amongst whom they had their conversation, i. e. 'They were of the same disposition, life, and society, and subject to the same condemnation and misery with that idolatrous part of mankind, who were subject to the power, and under the influence of that evil spirit, who is the head of the apostacy from God and righteousness;' but as Christians, they were raised up together with Christ from the power of death, and above the course of this world, and made to sit together with him in heavenly places, because they are made fellow-citizens with the saints, of the household of God, are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 22, &c. These are the "heavenly places" in which we are made to sit down with Christ; this the state, and these the objects, to which we stand related as Christians, in and through Christ our head. And thus in the passage before us, "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," i. e. 'Enriched us with all those gifts and favours as constitute us his family and household, fellow-citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem with angels, the general assembly of the first born, and the spirits of just men made perfect, under God the supreme and sovereign Lord, and under the protection and influence of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.'

Ver. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him.*] The election, choice, and predestination here spoken of, is evidently as extensive as the persons to whom he inscribes his epistle; which are *all the saints*, who continued in the profession of the Christian faith at Ephesus. And what they were elected or predestinated to, is so plain from the letter itself, that I apprehend no careful enquirer can mistake: *They were chosen to be holy and without blame in love*, i. e. 'to the profession of a religion that engages to the strictest purity and most fervent charity,' ver. 4. *They were predestinated to the adoption of children*, i. e. 'to be brought out of their Gentile state, into the family, church, and kingdom of God,' ver. 5. That good pleasure which God purposed in himself was, *in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather and unite under Christ*, the angels in heaven, and all nations, Jews and Gentiles upon earth; amongst whom the Ephesians were predestinated to obtain an inheritance, or to become part of the lot of his inheritance, verses 9—11. whereby of *strangers and foreigners*, they were made *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*. For this was the great mystery that God had purposed within himself, to accomplish and bring to light at the fulness of time, that *the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*, Chap. III. IV. VI. So that if the scriptures be allowed to explain themselves, the election and predestination spoken of in this epistle, is not the absolute election of particular persons to salvation; but the election and predestination of the Gentiles, to be made one body with the Jews themselves under Christ, to be constituted equally with them members of his church, and heirs to the blessings promised under the Messiah, without circumcision, or the least conformity to the law of Moses, upon the sole foundation of repentance and faith.

And that the apostle should insist so much upon this election and predestination of God, in reference to the Gentiles, will not appear at all strange, if we consider that these very terms were applied under the Old Testament, to the collective body of the Jewish nation. Thus David speaking of his people says, *O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones*. In the Greek version it is *εκλεκτοι αυτου*; his elect. And thus the Psalmist, Psal. cv. 6. And accordingly Moses says of them, *The Lord thy God, εξελεξατο*; the very word used of the Ephesians, *hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself*. Now as the Jews gloried in this character of being the chosen, elect people

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

choice, which he made of us Gentiles in Christ, to be his church before the beginning of the world; that by being thus constituted his people, we might be reformed from the vices of our Gentile state, and be engaged to lead holy and unblameable lives, and to abound in all those fruits of goodness and love, which are acceptable in his sight.

5 *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children*
by

For to this end he determined in his own eternal counsels, and according to the dictates of his good pleasure,

ple of God, because of those peculiar privileges they were favoured with; the apostle, in opposition to the proud Jews, transfers these characters to the believing Gentiles, and assures them that they, as Christians, were the elect, chosen people of God, because they were brought to the participation of all the great blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. This is evidently the sense of the words in this epistle, whatever may be the meaning of them in other places.

This choice of the Gentiles to be the church and people of God, was, as the apostle tells us, *before the foundation of the world*. The original word rendered *foundation*, is used by the best Greek writers to signify *the beginning* of any thing; so that the phrase, *before the foundation of the world*, signifies, *before the world began*. It seems probable, that the apostle in the expression, might intend to beat down that proud and self-conceited opinion of the Jews, who boasted, *that the world was created for their sake*, by assuring them, that it was so far from this, that God chose the uncircumcised Gentiles to be his peculiar people through faith, even before the creation of the world.

The election therefore of the Gentiles consisted in their being chosen to enjoy the privileges of the church of God; and the great end of God in this choice is expressed by the apostle to be, that they should *be holy, and without blame before him in love*; because the very religion they were called to the profession and belief of, required the strictest holiness, and the most exemplary charity. I doubt not but St. Paul had in this expression also the Jews in his thoughts: the holiness, of which they boasted, was purely ceremonial and external, and which did not reform their lives, and render them acceptable to God; the holiness, to which Christians were called, was real and internal, and such as consisted in an universal unblameableness of conversation, and which therefore was acknowledged and accepted as such by God. What the Jews did, was only *to be seen of men*; the Christian was to aim at such an holiness as should render him unblameable *before God*. The Jews, as the apostle expresses it, 1 Thes. ii. 15. *pleased not God, and were contrary to all men*; filled with envy, hatred, and contempt of all nations in the world besides their own, and persecuted the apostles for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; whereas the reigning, discriminating temper of a Christian, was to be love towards all men, and a fervent love towards all sincere believers, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Ver. 5. *Having predestinated us to the adoption of children.*] The original word *προοριστας*, is sometimes rendered by our translators, *before determined*; as Acts iv. 28. sometimes, *ordained before*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. and at other times, *predestinated*. It properly signifies, to determine, appoint, or decree any thing before hand; and when applied to God in the case before us, it denotes his everlasting purpose, or his fixed resolution and decree before the creation of the world, to receive the believing Gentiles, without circumcision, into the privileges of his church and people. And I cannot discern any real difference between the "predestination" spoken of in this verse, and the "election before the beginning of the world" spoken of in the former; for when God predetermined to adopt the believing Gentiles as members of his church, he did by that decree pre-elect them to that holiness of profession, which was the great intention of their adoption; so that their being predetermined to the adoption, was only God's eternal purpose to make them partakers of the privileges of his church; for which reason he also predetermined or chose them before the beginning of the world, to that unblameableness and love, which was the great design of this adoption; the decree relating to the means and the end being one and the same, and made before the foundation of the world.

What this adoption of children means, must be explained from other passages of scripture. It doth not mean the constituting any particular persons, exclusive of others, to be absolutely and at all events the children of God, so as to secure them finally and infallibly the reward of eternal life: This doth not appear to me to be the doctrine of scripture, at least not to be the doctrine of this place; the scriptures themselves will plainly fix the true sense of the expression. The apostle tells us,

by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

pleasure, to adopt us as children into his own family through Christ, by the preaching and belief of his gospel.

The apostle having assured the believing Ephesians, of God's eternal purpose to call them to the knowledge of the gospel, and the participation of the privileges of the church of God, in the five first verses, proceeds to shew them how great an instance this was of the sovereign mercy and free goodness of God.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

6 To the praise of the glory
of

That hereby we might learn to admire and adore
that

Rom. ix. 4. "that to the Israelites or Jews as a body or nation, pertained the adoption:" Agreeably hereto, God ordered Moses to tell Pharaoh, *Israel is my son, even my first-born*, Exod. iv. 22. this is spoken of the whole nation, good and bad, as a collective body: Yea, when the Jews grew a very corrupt and profligate people, God did not disown their relation to him as children; they were still children, though *rebellious children*, Is. i. 2. *a very froward generation, children in whom there was no faith*, Deut. xxxii. 20. What then was peculiarly implied in this their adoption, or being constituted the children or first-born of God? Why plainly, their being favoured with peculiar privileges, such as no other nation were, whereby they were treated by God amongst other nations, as the first-born is always preferred amongst the other children by the father of a family: And thus Moses himself explains it, *Ye are the children of the Lord your God; for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be an holy people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth*, Deut. xiv. 1. 3. In like manner God hath chosen or predetermined the believing, uncircumcised Gentiles, to the adoption of children to himself, having blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things; called them by the gospel to nobler privileges, than the Jews under the law were ever favoured with, whereby they have a better title to the character of God's children, than the Jews themselves had; especially as they were chosen in and through Christ the only Son of God, the promised seed of Abraham, and were therefore heirs through and with him of the blessedness promised. As Abraham was the father of the faithful, all believers are his spiritual seed and children; and as his blessedness was to come upon this his spiritual seed through the Messiah, their being called to partake of the privileges of his gospel and kingdom, is their proper and actual adoption; and as God hath predetermined them to this before the world begun, it was impossible that the peculiar covenant made long after with the Jews, could frustrate this eternal decree of God in their favour.

It is plain from hence, that the apostle in these expressions, endeavours to beat down the pride of the Jews, who gloried in their adoption, and treated all other nations of the earth with the utmost contempt and disdain, as though they had been abandoned and forsaken of God; and that he applies the distinguishing characters of the Jews, that had been given them in the Old Testament, to the uncircumcised believing Gentiles; assuring them that they were the objects of God's eternal decrees, and the true adoption, by being called to the profession and belief of the gospel: and therefore we may every one of us, who enjoy the privileges of the gospel state and church, say with this apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Election, predestination, and adoption, are privileges common to all who enjoy the benefits of the gospel, and profess Christianity; and as this is our happiness, it should be our care to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may not finally miss of that invaluable inheritance, which God hath prepared as the future recompence and portion of his faithful and obedient children.

Ver. 6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace.*] i. e. 'that men might acknowledge and praise him for his glorious, abundant, undeserved, sovereign goodness and mercy;' as it is expressed in the

next

of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. that amazing goodness of God, with which he hath favoured us by his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the By whom, as suffering and dying as the propitiation for the world, we have obtained that redemption

next verse, according to the riches of his grace. In the fifth verse the apostle declares, 'that their being predetermined to the adoption of children, was according to the good pleasure of his will;' owing to nothing but the dictates of his own wisdom and goodness; and the effect which God intended that the discovery of this his eternal purpose should have on men, is here declared to be, that they should gratefully praise him for this amazing instance of his favour.

Ibid. *Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*] The original word *εχαριτωσεν*, he hath made us accepted, is not used by any profane authors: However the sense of it is plain. It is used in the angel's salutation to the Virgin Mary, *Hail thou that art highly favoured*: and that the word there is rightly rendered, is plain from the reason which the angel himself gives, *Thou hast found favour with God*, Luke i. 28. 30. So that the plain meaning of the word, and the true rendering of it in the place before us, is, not as we have translated it, *made us accepted*, but, *highly favoured us*. God hath predetermined us to the adoption of children, to the praise of his glorious grace, wherewith he hath highly favoured us in and through the beloved, or, as some copies read it, *through his beloved Son*.

Ver. 7. *In whom we have redemption.*] The original word properly signifies freedom, or deliverance from any thing. "From enemies," Luke xxi. 28. "from the power of the grave," Rom. viii. 23. "from the punishment of death," Heb. xi. 35. and so in the place before us, "from the guilt and condemnation of sin," as is plain from what the apostle adds, *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*, i. e. 'the sins we were guilty of in our Gentile state, whereby we were enemies to God, and subject to his displeasure.' For this only is the forgiveness of which the apostle speaks; even that forgiveness upon which they became reconciled to God, and were constituted his children, members of his church, and visible heirs of salvation. So that the forgiveness of sins here spoken of, is not the eternal justification of sinners, from all the sins they are or can be guilty of, during the whole course of their lives; but strictly and precisely this, their being quickened by Christ when dead in sins, or their being justified and delivered from all the sins of their Gentile state, and so reconciled to God as to become his people, and put into a capacity of final and eternal salvation.

And this redemption, or freedom from sin, we have *through the blood of Christ*, i. e. by means of his death; for this is the constant meaning, whenever pardon, or any spiritual blessings are ascribed to his blood; the shedding of his blood being the evident demonstration of the reality of his death. The manner of speaking, that some have allowed themselves, from this representation of Christ's death by his blood, viz. that a drop of Christ's blood was sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, is a very crude and unjustifiable expression, that hath nothing in reason or scripture to support it; for the great stress, which the scripture lays, is constantly upon the death of Christ, and not upon any shedding of his blood, which implies less than his actually dying. Not to add, that his death would have been a very needless expence, could the deathless shedding of a drop, or greatest part, of his blood, have as effectually answered the purposes of God's grace; and they who by such kind of expressions think to do honour to Christ, should take care they do not impeach the wisdom and goodness of God the Father.

Now this redemption, and deliverance from the condemnation and guilt of sin, is obtained *through the blood*, or by the death, of Christ, as he by dying annulled that law, which pronounced accursed every one who did not continue in all things written in it, to do them; as the apostle himself expressly tells us, Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse*, i. e. dying an accursed death for us, and by introducing and establishing by his death that covenant of God, the great article of which is, justification by faith; *reconciling hereby both Jews and Gentiles unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, preaching peace to them that were afar off, and them that were nigh*, Eph. ii. 16, 17.

According to the riches of his grace.] i. e. from the mere dictates of his abundant mercy, of which this deliverance of the Gentiles from their sins, is the fullest demonstration. I would only farther observe, that these expressions of God's good pleasure, the riches of his grace, and the like, were formerly used of the Jewish nation. Thus Moses, *The Lord thy God chose thee to be a special people to himself, because the Lord loved you*, Deut. vii. 8. *not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart*, Deut. ix. 5. *only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them*,

the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,

8 *Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence ;*

9 *Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his own good pleasure, which he had purposed in himself :*

10 *That*

tion which consists in the forgiveness of sins, - and which is the noblest proof of his richest mercy ; in the abundant exercise of which, he hath given the fullest demonstration of his own infinite wisdom and prudence.

To this abundant mercy it is owing, that he hath granted us Gentiles a full knowledge and understanding of his own secret purpose and will, which he for so many ages concealed from mankind ;

Even

even you above all people, as it is this day, Deut. x. 15. So that as the election of the Jews to be God's peculiar people, was not owing to any particular worth and righteousness in them, but wholly to his sovereign goodness, and the mere dictates of his own good will ; so also was the election of the Gentiles to be his church and people in Christ, owing to the same unmerited goodness ; and the Jews had no more reason to wonder at, or object against this, than they had to wonder at and object against the former conduct of God, in the election of their own nation, whom God himself reproaches as a stiff-necked, provoking, and rebellious people, Deut. ix. 6, 7. And it is therefore with great propriety and force, that the apostle here refers this choice and election of the Gentiles, to the mere good-pleasure of God ; since it was sufficient to silence all the complaints of the Jews against this method of the Divine Providence, and to engage their affection to the Gentile converts as their brethren in Christ, when they considered this election as standing upon the same foundation as their own ; not the worthiness of the persons chosen in either case, but the benevolence and undeserved favour of God in both. And this the apostle farther magnifies in the verse immediately following.

Ver. 8. *Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.*] Or, as the words should, I think, have been rendered ; *which* (viz. grace) *he hath caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence.* These latter words, *in all wisdom and prudence,* may refer to the manner in which God hath caused his grace in Christ to abound towards us : It is with the greatest wisdom, in the design and appointment of it ; and with the highest prudence, in the season and execution of it. On this account St. Paul cries out, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !* Rom. xi. 33. and tells us, that by the revelation of the mystery, which was hid in God, the manifold wisdom of God was made known by the church, to the heavenly principalities and powers : or else this wisdom and prudence may refer to the Ephesians themselves, and the meaning will be, ' That God hath caused his grace to abound towards them, by giving them that wisdom and prudence, which was necessary to their understanding the mystery of his will in the calling the Gentiles ;' and thus it will be parallel to that passage in Colossians i. 9. *I do not cease to pray for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ;* and accordingly they are by some interpreters joined with the beginning of the following verse, " Having made known to us, in all wisdom and prudence, the mystery of his will." Either interpretation is agreeable to the context, and to St. Paul's manner of speaking on this subject, though I am rather inclined to this latter, especially as the ensuing words seem to explain, wherein this prudence and wisdom consisted.

Ver. 9. *Having made known to us the mystery of his will.*] i. e. his will, which had been long a mystery, or wholly unknown to the world ; the secret purposes of his own counsel and pleasure, in reference to the call of the Gentiles, as the following words evidently explain, and which is the usual sense of the word *mystery* in the New Testament ; which denotes, not an abstruse, unintelligible, and imperfectly revealed doctrine, but only that counsel or purpose of God, which was unknown to the world, and would have always remained so, had he not been pleased to discover it to mankind, by immediate revelation : It seems very probable, that the apostle, in the use of the word, *mystery*, refers to the idolatrous mysteries of Diana, who was worshipped in this city of Ephesus, and which were famous almost all over the world ; and turns their minds to the contemplation of a nobler mystery, viz. the secret purpose of God to save the world by Jesus Christ. And this mystery God made known :

According to his own good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.] The season, when this mystery or secret purpose of God was to be discovered, depended on God's good pleasure, or the resolutions of his own wisdom ; and this resolution God had predisposed, or intended should take place, at the dispensation

10 *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.*

11 *Even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance,*

Even that purpose, which his own goodness directed him to, and which he formed in his own breast, and foredetermined should take place when the dispensation of the fulness of time should commence, viz. to collect into one body under one head, by Jesus Christ, all the angels of heaven, and all good men on earth, whether Jews or Gentiles:

I say by Christ, through whom we Jews are become the lot of his inheritance, being predetermined

dispensation of the fulness of time. For I think the eighth, ninth, and tenth verses, should be divided in this manner, ver. 8. *Which he hath caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will,* ver. 9. *According to his own good pleasure, [or kind resolution,] which he before purposed or formed for the dispensation of the fulness of time,* ver. 10. *To gather together in Christ all things in heaven and earth.* And thus the *εὐδοκία* or good pleasure of God will refer, not to God's making known to the Ephesians the mystery of his will, but to his uniting under Christ as the common head all things in heaven and earth, at the dispensation of the fulness of time; and this I apprehend is the natural and proper division of the words,

Ver. 10. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, εἰς οἰκονομίαν.*] The preposition may be rendered, *at*, and is so used by sacred and profane writers. The original word *οἰκονομία* denotes the administration, disposition, or dispensation of any affairs by the father of a family, or the steward of an household, or by any other person whatsoever; and therefore it signifies in the place before us, the conduct and disposals of the Divine mercy and grace to the Gentile world, in *the fulness of time*; that time which God had fixed in his own counsels, and which he foresaw would be most proper for the accomplishment of his own purposes of goodness to the world. Now the good pleasure of God that was to take place at this fulness of time, and the dispensation that was to be introduced under it, was;

To gather together in one all things in Christ.] The words may be better rendered, *to comprehend, sum up, or collect under one head in Christ*, i. e. to unite under Christ as the common head, vide ver. 22.

All things in heaven and upon earth.] Some expositors interpret these words 'of the church triumphant and militant, the saints in heaven and on earth:' but I apprehend the apostle hath a more extensive meaning, and that the things in heaven and earth to be united under Christ, are all the good angels of heaven, and all sincere Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, on earth. This is evidently St. Paul's doctrine in other places, and particularly in the last verses of this very chapter, where he tells us, that God *hath set him far above all principalities and powers, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet*; which is the very doctrine asserted in the passage before us.

Ver. 11. *In him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance.*] The words, *in him*, are very injudiciously made, in our version, the end of the tenth verse, whereas they ought to be the beginning of the eleventh, since they are in strict connection with it; and I think this and the ensuing verse plainly relate to the Jewish converts, who, as the apostle expresses it, had obtained an inheritance in Christ; or, as the word should have been rendered, "In or through whom we Jews are become the lot of his inheritance." According to that passage in Deut. xxxii. 9. *for the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, i. e. the people whom he hath chosen for himself to be his peculiar care; or, as the word signifies in profane writers, 'in whom we have received the right of inheritance, not of an earthly possession, as our forefathers had by Joshua, but of an heavenly and eternal one.' And this sense agrees with the fourteenth verse, where the apostle tells them, "that the spirit was the earnest of their inheritance."

Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.] This predetermination may either refer to the inheritance they were entitled to the possession of, as Christians; or else, to what the structure and connection of the words seem rather to point out; they were predetermined to be to the praise of his glory, as it follows at the twelfth verse; that hereby they might acknowledge and adore the sovereign disposals of the Divine wisdom and mercy; since it was not owing to any merit of theirs, that they received this right of possession to the heavenly inheritance, but merely to the good pleasure of God, who accomplishes the counsels of his own will by the fittest means, and at the properest season.

Ver.

heritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;

12 *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

13 *In whom ye also trusted,*

mined to this happiness, according to the purpose of God, who is able to accomplish the whole good pleasure of his will;

That so we, who before hoped in Christ as the promised seed, and Messiah, and were first converted to his faith and obedience, might praise him for his glorious mercy vouchsafed us:

And through whom also you Gentiles are become the

Ver. 12. *Who first trusted in Christ.*] The words, literally rendered, are, *who before hoped in Christ.* And this, I think, is a proper characteristic, or distinguishing mark, of the Jews; they had the promises of the Messiah or Christ, and therefore hoped in him, before the time of his actual appearance: Thus we find it was the common character of the devout Jews, that they *waited for the consolation of Israel, and looked for redemption in Jerusalem*, Luke ii. 25. 38. i. e. they hoped in the Messiah before the time of his appearance.

Ver. 13. *In whom also ye trusted after that ye heard the word of truth.*] This change of persons seems plainly to point out, that the persons in the foregoing verse were the believing Jews, to which here the believing Gentiles are opposed. But it is more worthy observation, that the words, *ye trusted*, are not in the original, but added by way of supplement by our translators. I think also that there is a supplement wanting, but can by no means approve that in our version; the true one is to be had from verse eleventh, where the apostle, speaking in the person of the Jews, says, *in whom we have received the right of inheritance*; and here applying the discourse to the converted Gentiles, says also of them, *in whom you also have received the right of inheritance*; Jews and Gentiles being united under Christ as their common head, having both heard and obeyed the gospel of their salvation: and the great evidence of their having received this right was:

In whom also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.] Or, “in which (gospel) having also believed;” since it was in consequence of their hearing the word of truth, and believing that gospel, which raised them to the hopes of salvation, that they received the Spirit of promise.

The Spirit of promise] unquestionably means those extraordinary and miraculous gifts, which were conferred on the primitive Christians, upon their first believing in Christ, whereby they were assured of their acceptance with God, and being made partakers of the benefits of the gospel salvation. It is called *the Spirit of promise*, because promised by God under the Old Testament, as what should be poured out in the latter days, or times of the Messiah; and because promised by our blessed Lord to his apostles, to lead them into all truth, and to be the grand confirmation of the doctrine they taught in his name.

With this Spirit of promise the believing Ephesians *were sealed*. The use of a seal is for confirmation and certainty, to ascertain and establish any thing written or done, as the act and deed of the person who writes and doth it; in this sense the Spirit, conferred on those who believed in his extraordinary gifts, is metaphorically called “God’s seal;” because, as it was conferred immediately by God, in confirmation of the doctrine of salvation and pardon by faith in Christ, it was a solemn assurance and proof to those who received it, upon their believing the gospel, that they were accepted of God, and rendered heirs of eternal life. Hence, amongst the primitive Christians, baptism itself was frequently stiled *σφραγίς* or a seal, because this spirit was frequently received immediately after baptism. Under the Old Testament Abraham received circumcision as the seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had when uncircumcised, Rom. iv. 11. not to make him a righteous person, but as a testimony from God that he accepted him as such. And amongst the Gentiles themselves, seals, and certain marks and symbols were used to be given to persons by the priests, when they admitted them into their mysteries; and particularly, there was a sacred seal or ring which had the figure of a she-goat, peculiar to Diana, the great goddess of these Ephesians, which was made use of when any persons were initiated into her solemn rites: and therefore it is with great propriety, that St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that they received the seal of the Spirit of promise upon their faith, to put them in mind that they were hereby appropriated to God in Christ, and to remember them both of the high dignity and obligations of their Christian profession. This spirit, he farther adds,

Ver.

ed, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation;

In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

the lot of his inheritance, having heard and obeyed the doctrine of truth, even that gospel which gives you the knowledge and promise of salvation.

And that you are become the heirs of salvation equally with the believing Jews, is abundantly evident from hence; in that, upon your believing the gospel of Christ, ye received the holy Spirit in his extraordinary gifts, which God promised by his holy prophets, and Christ promised to his apostles; whereby God ratified, as by a seal impressed on you, your adoption into his family.

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption

Even that spirit, which is the earnest and pledge of our future inheritance as the children of God; till

Ver. 14. *Is the earnest of our inheritance.*] The original word *ᾠραβών*, seems properly to denote, the first part of the price that is paid in any contract, as an earnest and security of the remainder, and which therefore is not taken back, but kept till the residue is paid to compleat the whole sum. And thus it differs from a pledge, which is somewhat given for the security of a contract, but redeemed and restored, when the contract is compleated; but it must be owned, that the word is used to denote both an earnest and pledge, and in either sense it is very properly applied to the holy Spirit of promise: 't was properly a pledge of the inheritance to Christians; since as they received it immediately from God, as the evidence of their adoption, it was a noble security that they should receive the inheritance of children; it was also an earnest, or actual part of their inheritance; since it was properly a divine and spiritual blessing, peculiar and appropriate to the children of God, and which dwelt in them as a sure evidence of their being accepted with God, and being constituted with Christ heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

Until the redemption of the purchased possession.] Some interpreters refer these words to the former verse, "Ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise, until the redemption of the purchased possession;" and think the next words, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance," should be included in a parenthesis: But I see no reason why we should forsake that sense, which flows from the structure of the words itself. The Spirit is the earnest or pledge of our inheritance, and consequently given till the inheritance itself is actually bestowed, and to assure us of it in the mean while; and this is what is expressed by the words, "Until the redemption of the purchased possession." The redemption is the day or season of our redemption, as we have it in that parallel place, Eph. iv. 30. "Ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And thus Luke xxi. 28. "When these things begin to come to pass, look up; for your redemption," (i. e. 'the season of your deliverance') "draws nigh." The other word *περιποινσις*, which we render "the purchased possession," properly signifies the acquisition or salvation of any thing, Heb. x. 9. "We are of them that believe to the acquisition or salvation of the soul:" And thus "God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by Christ," 1 Thes. v. 9. And thus in the place before us, "The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance till the redemption of the salvation," i. e. 'till the day of that redemption comes, when we shall obtain final and eternal salvation, or that inheritance of eternal life and glory, which is the full portion of the children of God.' And though the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are ceased, and therefore this sealing and pledge of the Spirit, in the original meaning of the apostle, is not to be expected by Christians now; since no one hath any foundation from the gospel to expect those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, in which this sealing and pledge originally consisted: yet if we are conscious to ourselves of those inward dispositions of piety and virtue, which wherever they are wrought, are owing to the kind influences and disposals of God, we may look on them as the seal of his Spirit impressed on us, and as the true earnest of our future salvation and redemption. For wherever the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness is impressed, that impression is God's mark upon the soul, the sure evidence of its acceptance with, and interest in God's favour, and of its unquestionable title to his kingdom and glory. Labour therefore after this truly Divine resemblance, and cultivate all the genuine graces of the holy Spirit upon your hearts: and thus, whenever you review your reigning temper, you will discern, to your own unspeakable comfort, as certain and infallible evidences of your meetness for, and right to, the future salvation of God, as though you had even the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit themselves. For "though to be carnally minded is death, yet to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. till the time comes, when all believers shall obtain their final redemption by a blessed resurrection, and praise him for the glorious mercy vouchsafed them.

The apostle in the former part of this chapter, having instructed the believing converts at Ephesus in the certainty of their election and predestination to the privileges of the Christian church, and put them in mind of those extraordinary gifts which they received as the earnest of their inheritance; proceeds to assure them, that their stedfast continuance in the faith, of which he had been informed, was the matter of his joy and thanksgiving, and that he continually prayed for them, that they might have a more thorough knowledge of the nature and invaluable benefits of Christianity.

T E X T.

15, 16 *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you;*

17 *Making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our*

P A R A P H R A S E.

Upon this account, because of this singular favour that hath been bestowed on you, I continually give thanks unto God in your behalf, especially since I have been informed of your constant fidelity in your Christian profession, and of your sincere love to all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles.

And at the same time I cease not to pray for you, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great author

Veres 15, 16 *After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus.*] Those who would have this epistle inscribed to the Laodiceans, and not to the Ephesians, think their opinion supported by this passage; for they imagine that these words prove that St. Paul had not been actually with these persons to whom he here writes; because he says, *after I had heard of your faith*, i. e. according to them; “after I had been informed of your conversion to the Christian faith.” Now this could not agree to the Ephesians, who had actually been converted by St. Paul in person; and this objection would have been of some weight, if by “hearing of their faith” was necessarily meant, “receiving information of their conversion;” but it is by no means necessary to understand the expression in this sense. By *faith* is frequently denoted in scripture, *fidelity*, or constancy in the faith: Thus St. Paul thanks God in behalf of the Thessalonians, *because that your faith groweth exceedingly*, 2 Thes. i. 3. i. e. ‘you grow more and more confirmed and established in your Christian profession:’ So in the place before us; the apostle had converted them to the Christian faith, and after he had been informed of their constancy in the profession of it, it was the matter of his joy and thanksgiving to God, that he was not, with respect to them, like to run in vain, and labour in vain.

And love unto all the saints.] I doubt not but the apostle here peculiarly refers to the Jewish converts, who seem to have made part of every Christian church which was planted, and yet who were too rigidly tenacious of their Jewish rites and ceremonies. This occasioned oftentimes very warm differences and contentions, the Jewish and Gentile converts often censuring, and even dividing from one another. The apostle therefore commends the Ephesians, as free from this narrow dividing temper, and because of their sincere affection to all Christians, and makes it the matter of his thanksgiving to God. And thus far the fifteenth verse should have reached, to make the sense complete, and the next verse should have thus begun, and been continued on:

Ver. 17. *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ.*] This without all controversy is the characteristic of God the Father, of whom our Lord himself says to his disciples; *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, John xx. 17. But it can never be said in any sense of Christ, that he is the God of the eternal Father.

Ibid. This God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is here farther stiled, *the Father of glory*. This may mean either, the Father who is possessed of, and encompassed with, eternal and unchangeable glory; or

our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

18 *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

19 *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe.*

20 *Ac-*

author of his glory, and of the future glory of all who believe in him, may farther grant unto you a wise and discerning spirit, that you may attain to a more thorough knowledge of, and acquaintance with, him :

Even such an enlightened mind and understanding, as shall enable you to apprehend and know what is that blessedness, which, as Christians, you are called to the hope of, and how exceedingly glorious that inheritance is, which he hath reserved for, and will finally divide amongst, sincere Christians ;

And how exceeding and amazingly great that power is, which he shall hereafter exert upon us who believe, when he shall raise us from the dead.

Even

or who is the author and bestower of glory, in which sense the Hebrew and Greek words, rendered, “ Father,” are sometimes used. And this interpretation is exceedingly proper in the place before us ; for as the apostle immediately after speaks of the glorious inheritance of Christians, and the high dignity to which our Lord Jesus Christ is advanced ; no character could better suit the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, than that of “ the Father of glory,” the Original and Author of all that glory which the Son hath, and which Christians hereafter hope to have. Thus he is called, *the Father of lights*, Jam. i. 17. because the parent and source of blessedness, the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift. To this eternal Father of light and glory, the apostle prays for the Ephesians ;

Ibid. That he would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,] or in order to their farther and more effectual knowledge of him ; for the preposition *ev*, is frequently used by the best writers for *eis*, to denote the end and design of any thing. “ By the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” is not here meant, as I apprehend, that spirit of which the apostle had spoken at the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, which is called “ the Spirit of promise, the seal, and earnest of their inheritance ;” because the apostle appeals to them, that they had it already, and therefore it was not now so properly an object of his prayer : This spirit they had received as an assurance from God, that he had accepted them as his people ; and therefore the apostle farther prays, that they might receive such a spirit, as would lead them into a more full acquaintance of their invaluable privileges and hopes as Christians, viz. a spirit of wisdom and revelation, i. e. a wise and discerning spirit ; or rather, such influences from the Father of light and glory, as should render them wise in the things of Christ, and should discover to them the greatness of that future happiness which awaited them ; and this the next words shew :

Ver. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.*] The expression is evidently put in opposition to, and is certainly explicative of, the former words, and should have been rendered, “ Even enlightened eyes of your understanding.” “ I make mention of you,” says the apostle, “ in my prayers, that God would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, even enlightened eyes of your understanding,” i. e. “ a mind free from prejudice and darkness, that you may clearly apprehend, and pass a true judgment concerning the great object of your hopes as Christians.” The expression of *the eyes of the understanding*, is metaphorical, but the sense of it plain and obvious ; it is used both by Latin and Greek authors of the best authority. See Gatak. Auton. Lib. 3. v. 15.

Ibid. *Ye may know what is the hope of his calling.*] i. e. that ye may more clearly understand, and so as more effectually to impress your hearts, and influence your lives, what is the hope of God’s calling ; or what that blessedness is, which God hath been pleased to raise you to the hope of, by your conversion to Christianity. And this is the frequent sense of the word “ hope” in the sacred writings, viz. ‘ the object of hope,’ or, ‘ the Christian happiness hoped for.’

19. *And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe.*] That is, ‘ That you may be able to form some suitable conception of that amazing infinite power of God, which he shall exert in our future resurrection.’ For as this is the hope of our Christian calling, and the peculiar promise of the gospel, so it is one of the noblest instances to which even Almighty power itself can reach : and that the apostle refers, not to the power of God in the conversion of the Ephesians, but that which should be exerted in their resurrection, is plain from the next words :

N

Ver.

20 *According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

21 *Far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*

22 *And hath put all things under his feet.*

23 *And*

Even the same almighty power, which he exerted in Christ himself, when he raised him from the dead, and placed him at his own right hand in heavenly places :

Exalting him far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and if there be any other name of superior authority and dignity, that can possibly be named, either in this world, or that which is to come.

Thus subjecting the whole hierarchy of heaven, and all the powers of earth to him as Lord :

And

Ver. 20. *According to the working of his mighty power.*] And these words should be made the beginning of the twentieth verse, and not the end of the nineteenth ; for it is dividing them from what they stand immediately connected with, and interrupting and disturbing the plain sense of the apostle : for the sentence complete is this, That the future resurrection of believers shall be accomplished, according to the working of that mighty power, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead. The Almighty power of God that accomplished the latter, shall also certainly effect the former : And here the twentieth verse should end, and the twenty-first begin.

Ver. 21. *And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.*] The right hand is the seat of dignity and honour ; and therefore when God the Father is said to have set Christ, or caused him to sit at his right hand, the meaning is ; ‘ That he placed him next in dignity to himself :’ So that the words of Pharaoh to Joseph, seems to be a just representation of this high advancement of our blessed Lord, *Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled : Only in the throne will I be greater than thou.* And thus the following words explain it.

The *principality, power, might, and dominion*] here mentioned, plainly denote the different degrees and orders of rule and dignity, which are either amongst the angels of heaven, or the great ones on earth. I question whether it is easy to assign the strict meaning of, and difference between, each of these words : I would only observe, that the first word *αρχη*, which we render *principality*, is used by the best writers to signify ‘ empire of the largest extent ;’ the empire of Alexander when he had conquered the world, *Ælian. V. H. l. 3. c. 29.* and the empire of the Romans, *Herodian. l. 1. proem.* And that the last word *κυριότης*, *dominion*, is often used to denote persons of very low power and dignity ; as when a person takes a pole, he is called the *κύριος*, the lord or judge of the pole. So that in these words are plainly included all the highest, intermediate, and lowest orders of government, dominion, and power, whether of angels or men, by whatsoever names or characters they are designed, or distinguished either in heaven or earth. For thus the apostle expressly adds :

And every name that is named either in this world or that which is to come.] That the expression “ of this world and that which is to come,” is used to denote the present and the future world, is plain from *Matt. xii. 32.* where, it is said, “ That if any one speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall neither be forgiven him in this world, or that which is to come,” i. e. ‘ never, either here or hereafter.’ And this I think must be the meaning of it in the passage before us, “ For Christ was seated at God’s right hand in the heavenly places ;” i. e. ‘ after his ascension into heaven he was advanced there to the highest dignity, at the right hand of the Majesty on high ;’ by consequence far above all the principalities and powers in heaven itself, and therefore much more above every name of dominion, authority, and power, that can possibly be named on earth : so that the expression “ of this world and that which is to come,” can only be added by way of explication, of what was before very plainly, though not so strongly, expressed : and therefore I think Mr. Locke’s interpretation of these words a little too low, who apprehends that no more is meant by the heavenly places, than the kingdom or church of God. But as the apostle expressly mentions Christ’s being constituted head of the church at the twenty-second verse, it would look very much like a tautology if he meant no more by it in this.

Ver.

23 *And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him, who filleth all in all.*

C H A P. II.

I *And you hath he quickened,*

And constituting him in every thing the head of his church, which is his body, and as such the fulness, the perfection, or completion of Christ, who filleth all the members of this his spiritual body with all spiritual and heavenly blessings :

And who in particular hath filled you Gentiles, with these excellent and divine gifts, who before your

Ver. 23. The church is here compared to a body, deriving all its nourishment and influences, its growth and support, its direction and management from Christ as the head ; even as the natural body is influenced and supported, guided and managed by its natural head. And this the apostle further explains by adding :

“ Which is his fulness, who filleth all in all :” or, as the words should be rendered, “ all things with all things.” Some interpreters think, that Christ is here said to be the fulness of the Father, as the Father hath, by Christ, united heaven and earth, Jews and Gentiles into one body to himself. But this seems a forced interpretation, and not suitable to the connection of the words. I think they evidently relate to the Church, which is properly the fulness of Christ considered as the head of a body, which consists of different members, altogether constituting a perfect body : thus the Jews and Gentiles are the different members of Christ’s church, and these different members are the full complement of his body. And in a sense like this we find the original word *πληρωμα* used by the best Greek writers, *Ælian*. V. H. L. 5. c. 10. *Dionys. Halicar.* l. 1. p. 25. use it of the rowers or sailors in a ship : and accordingly amongst ourselves we say, That the ship’s crew is its complement. *Philostratus*, p. 691, calls the armed men in the Trojan horse its *πληρωμα*, or complement. And *Aristides* calls the inhabitants of a city by the same name : so that this word is with great elegance and propriety used here by our apostle, to denote the members of the Christian church, whether it be likened to a natural or political body. If to a natural body, the several members are the proper complement of it, that by which the body is rendered perfect and compleat. If to a political body, such as a city or a kingdom ; Christians are still the complement of each, as the citizens of the one, and subjects of the other. And as they are the subjects of Christ, they are his fulness and complement, as they constitute him a real Head, Lord, and Prince. “ For he filleth all things, all the members of his church, with all things,” i. e. “ with all spiritual and divine blessings ; for it hath pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell.”

I doubt not, but that in these expressions of “ the body of Christ,” “ and the fulness of him who filleth all in all,” the apostle had respect to the famous statue of Diana, who was the great goddess of these Ephesians. Her image was that of a woman, and her body filled with the breasts of a woman ; to denote, as St. Jerom on the place tells us, ‘ that she was the Nurse, Supporter, and Life of all living creatures :’ or, as *Macrobius* informs us, *Saturn.* l. 1. c. 20. ‘ she represented the Earth, or Nature, by whose nourishment the whole Universe is supported.’ Now this gives a beautiful turn to the apostle’s expression. The church of Christ is that body, that *πληρωμα* or fulness, which he upholds and enriches by his bounty. Diana, amongst the Ephesians, was esteemed the nurse and supporter of all things, and her many breasts denoted her various methods and sources by which she conveyed her nourishment to the universe : such a one, the apostle tells the Ephesians, Christ really was : for he filleth all things with all things. He filleth the church and all its members with a bountiful and rich variety of blessings ; for, as St. John, who also lived long at Ephesus, tells us, in the very same manner of expression : “ And from his fulness we have all received grace for grace.” And here this chapter is made to end : but, as I apprehend, greatly to the interruption of the series of the apostle’s argument and discourse ; for to me, nothing can be more plain, than that the three first verses of the next chapter are in the strictest connection with these last words, “ Who filleth all in all.” But however evident this appears to me, yet no interpreters or critics, that I have seen, have taken the least notice of it ; and therefore, for want of it, have been greatly at a loss for the construction of the words, and how to fix a proper supplement to make up the sense of them. Our translation hath it thus :

Ver. 1. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*] The words, “ Hath he quickened,” are not in the original, but supplied from the fifth verse of this second chapter ; but not to mention the length of this parenthesis, which must be here supposed, which however is a strong argument that the supplement is not just, I would observe farther to this purpose, that the change of

ened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

your conversion were so intirely under the power of sin and vice, as that there remained no likely hopes of your recovery to a better state, and a more virtuous and holy life.

The apostle having mentioned in the foregoing chapter, the great privileges to which the Ephesians became entitled, by their conversion to Christianity, takes occasion to inhance the greatness of the Divine mercy towards them, by putting them in mind of their former state of corruption and guilt. "Even you," saith he, at verse 1. "hath Christ filled, who were dead in trespasses and sins," i. e. intirely under the power of sinful and corrupt habits: so that there was no rational and likely prospect of their ever recovering themselves, by any natural methods, to the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue.

Some persons observe here, that the expression, which we render, "dead in

persons in the first and fifth verses, will not admit of it: in the first verse it is, "You who were dead in sins;" in the fifth verse, "We who were dead;" if the same verb had been intended in both places, the pronoun repeated in the fifth must have been the same as mentioned in the first: but as the apostle changes the persons, it is plain, that the "quickening," mentioned in the fifth verse, cannot be the supplement of the first. No: the supplement is to be fetched from the words immediately foregoing, "The fulness of him that filleth all in all;" and, as it follows, "Who filleth even you Ephesian Gentiles, who were once dead in trespasses and sins; filleth them with the fulness of God, as the apostle prayeth for them," Eph. iii. 19. i. e. with all spiritual blessings, which flow originally from God, and are communicated by Christ: and that this is the meaning I apprehend no one will any longer doubt, who considers that exactly parallel passage, Colos. ii. 9, 10. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity substantially," and, observe the expression, "Ye are filled by him, who is the head of all principality and power;" the very thing which the apostle here asserts of the Ephesians, and the very same description he here gives of the character and dignity of Christ. And thus as the sense is noble, the construction is easy and natural; and agreeable to St. Paul's way of writing. A like defective form of expression we have, chap. i. ver. 13. And the same chapter furnishes us with an instance of his descending from a general assertion to a particular application of the same things, ver. 10. 'God intended,' says he, 'to unite τα πάντα all things under one head in Christ;' immediately after which he mentions the two great and separate bodies to be thus united, ver. 11. 'in whom we Jews have obtained an inheritance,' and at ver. 13. 'in whom, καὶ υμεῖς, You Gentiles have obtained an inheritance.' And thus in the place before us: "Christ filleth all things, all the members of his Church, with all spiritual blessings; καὶ υμεῖς, and even you Ephesians also, who before were dead in trespasses and sins; so habituated and abandoned to vice, as that there was no natural hope, no moral prospect of your recovery to a better life. For this is the proper meaning, of being

Dead in trespasses and sins.] These words are not to be strained and tortured to signify, that men by nature have no more power to do good, than dead men have to stir and act. St. Paul was a just and accurate writer, and uses this metaphorical expression in the known sense of it. The Jewish writers denoted "abandoned sinners" by the single word כְּהִים, or "dead men; Philo, the Jew, speaks of bad men as "dying the life of virtue," and "living the life of wickedness," l. 1. de Allegor. And Sophocles, speaking of those who give themselves up to pleasures, says, 'I do not think that such a one lives, but I esteem him to be dead,' in *Antigone*. Many other instances of a like nature I could easily mention; but these are sufficient to shew the proper meaning of being *dead in trespasses and sins*, viz. "the being addicted to a vicious course, and under the strong power and influence of sinful habits:" As the apostle himself explains it in the two verses immediately following.

I shall only now add, that as God hath filled even you with all spiritual blessings through Christ, and favoured you with the benefits of everlasting redemption, so you ought not to live as men dead in trespasses and sins, but in all righteousness and holiness, as those who are alive to God, and hope to live for ever with the Lord.

“ trespasses in sins,” may be rendered, “ dead to trespasses and sins ;” undoubtedly it may, and is and must be so rendered, Rom. vi. 11. “ Likewise reckon ye “ also your selves to be dead unto sin,” i. e. as wholly free from the power of it, as a dead person is to the law he is under when alive. And if we thus understand it in the place before us, the sense will be very good ; that being by their conversion wholly freed from the power and dominion of sin, they were filled by Christ with spiritual blessings.

But I think a more affecting sense is conveyed by our own version : “ You hath “ he filled, you hath he favoured with the gospel of truth, with the knowledge “ of God, with the hopes of salvation, and with that spirit which is the earnest “ of your future redemption ; even you, who once were dead in trespasses and “ sins.” This is, I think, evidently the meaning of the expression at the fifth verse, where their being saved by grace, is opposed to their being before dead in trespasses : and it must appear to every careful reader, that the design of this chapter is to excite in the Ephesians, an high sense of the riches of God’s mercy in their redemption by Christ ; and that nothing could be a properer introduction to this noble subject, than the putting them in mind, of what they were once, viz. “ dead in,” and as Gentiles absolutely under the power of their “ trespasses and “ sins.” And that this was in reality their condition, the apostle proves by adding :

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

2. *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the curse of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience :*

For you also formerly indulged to, and lived in, the commission of the worst of crimes, according to the corrupt course of this present world, and under the suggestion of that evil being, who presides over the aerial empire, even that spirit who influences the minds and practice of disobedient and ungodly men : Yea,

3. *Among*

Amongst

Ver. 2. *In which, in time past, ye walked.*] “ To walk” in scripture frequently denotes the course and method of a person’s life, or his general practice and behaviour in the world ; and therefore “ to walk in sins,” is to be addicted to the practice of them, and live in the habitual allowed commission of them ; and in this they were like the rest of the Gentiles : for they “ walked in sins,”

Κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα, according to the course of this world.] The Greek word αἰὼν*, and likewise the Latin word *Ævum*†, both signify the “ life of man,” and from thence, by an easy figure, “ the “ manner and custom of a person’s living ;” and therefore, it denotes here, the corrupt principles and morals, and particularly the idolatrous practices, of the Gentile world, with which the Ephesians were as truly chargable as the rest of mankind, before their conversion to the faith of Christ. And this corrupt and wicked life they led,

According to the prince of the power of the air.] *The power of the air* signifies that government and dominion which is exercised by evil spirits, who are supposed to have their habitation assigned them in the air above us ; and who are represented in scripture as subject to One, who is the Head and Prince over them, the author of their apostacy from God, and their leader in their rebellion against him ; called here *the prince of the power of the air* ; or of that government which is exercised in the regions of the air, and amongst wicked and apostate spirits, who now work in the children of disobedience, or amongst the children of disobedience, influencing them to continue in their idolatry and vices, and to refuse submission to the gospel of the Son of God.

* Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦδε λυγρὴ ψυχὴ τε καὶ αἰὼν. Hom. II. v. 453.

See also Pindar—Αἰὼν τ’ ἐφέπε μοῖσιμος. Olym. A. v. 18.

† ————Positis inglorius armis

Exiget hic ævum.———Virg. Æneid. X. v. 53.

3 *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.*

Amongst such as these, we also, all of us Jews and Gentiles before our conversion to Christianity lived like them in the gratification of our sensual appetites and lusts; obeying the dictates of our corrupt passions and reasonings; so that we were as truly and naturally subject to the wrath and displeasure of God, even as the rest of mankind.

REMARKS.

Ver. 3. *Amongst whom also we all had our conversation in times past.*] The apostle here changes the persons. Of the Ephesians, he says, *Ye were dead in trespasses and sins*, and that *they walked in them under the influence of evil spirits*, to whom they paid a superstitious and idolatrous worship. But this last could not so well be affirmed of the Jews, who were under the special government of God himself, and had his holy law for their immediate conduct and direction; and were not subject to the god of this world, as being free from the idolatrous practices of the rest of mankind: but notwithstanding this the Jews were exceedingly corrupt in their morals, and therefore the apostle justly ranks them amongst *the children of disobedience*, and affirms in the most general manner, *amongst whom we all had*, Jews and Gentiles, “our conversation in times past,” being all addicted to many of the same crimes, and so chargeable with the same guilt. For thus it follows:

We had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh.] “The lusts of the flesh” are men’s sensual appetites, their bodily inclinations, tendencies and desires; and when men are said “to have their conversation in them,” or, as the words may be rendered, “to live and act by them;” it means their being habitually subject to, and influenced by the instinct and power of those sensual appetites and passions, in opposition to the dictates of their reason, and the principles of true religion and virtue. And that this was their case, the apostle further shews from the effects:

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.] The literal version of the words is this: *Doing the wills of the flesh and of the thoughts*, i. e. they did whatever their fleshly appetites prompted them to; and not only thus, but they studied after methods of vice and wickedness, and employed their thoughts how to invent new gratifications of their corrupt appetites and passions, and allowed themselves the freest indulgence in them. The consequence of this was:

And were by nature children of wrath even as others.] To explain this passage it must be considered; that these words are added by the apostle, as the last and finishing article of the misery of the Ephesians, antecedent to their conversion, and that they are a conclusion drawn from what went before, and stand in immediate connection with it, as is plain from the copulative particle that joins them. They were before described, as persons under the power and dominion of evil spirits, influenced by their counsels, and addicted to their worship; as led by their sensual appetites and inclinations, and as habitually indulging the most corrupt desires of their bodies, and the vilest imaginations that could enter into their hearts. And for this reason the apostle adds, “they were by nature children of wrath;” they were children of wrath, because of the evil inclinations they indulged, the corrupt reasonings and principles that influenced them, and the numerous vices they were guilty of in practice. But how did this make them children of wrath by nature? Why because these corrupt passions and appetites were probably, in a great measure, derived from the criminal indulgences of their immediate parents, fixed in them from their earliest infancy, settled in them by education, confirmed in them by example, and strengthened in them by the superstitions and impurities of an idolatrous worship. So that as they were born and bred in a very corrupted state of the world, and trained up from their very infancy amidst debauchery and vice, and addicted to it themselves from their earliest days, they are said to be by nature, or naturally, children of wrath; because wickedness naturally renders men liable to it, and in reality prepares them for it; and because what men are by inclination, education, or early habit, they are so naturally, or by nature.

It is evident by the very form of expression, that the apostle refers to their condition before their conversion, and not to that which may be at all times affirmed equally of all mankind. For he says, and *were* by nature, not *are* by nature; and therefore their being formerly children of wrath, could only refer to the vices of their condition before conversion, and means no more, than their being subject to God’s displeasure, because educated and brought up in, and habituated by, inclination and practice to the worst of immoralities and vices: This is the meaning of the word in the best writers. Aristophanes speaking of the habits of men, saith, “It is difficult for a man to change that nature which he hath always had, though sometimes upon admonition from others men change their

“manners,”

REMARKS.

I have not here entered into the dispute about the doctrine of the corruption of nature, and the liableness thereby of all men to the curse of God in this life, and the wrath of God for ever: And I have very good reasons for not doing it; and particularly, because my intention is, to give the plain literal sense of scripture, and not to enter into needless and angry disputes; and because I apprehend errors and mistaken opinions are most easily removed, not by professed and warm oppositions to them, but by building up and establishing the contrary truth. And therefore to leave the consideration, whether there be other parts of scripture which prove, that men are, as born into the world, and before any personal guilt of their own, subject to the wrath and curse of God in this life and that which is to come, unless the being born subject to the curse of death, be all that is intended; I would only observe, that this uncomfortable doctrine, is not the doctrine of this passage, and can never be proved, as I apprehend, from the literal or critical sense of it; but it is time to pass to the doctrinal and practical observations, from this passage of holy scripture. The doctrines here contained are such as these; particularly in relation to God

The FATHER.

He is by the apostle styled, 'eminently,' and by way of dignity and distinction 'God,' ver. 2. *God, our Father*, and represented as the great original and author

"manners," Σφνκ. v. 1448—9. where "nature" can mean only "that course of life a man hath been long habituated to;" and speaking of a person he introduces; he gives him this character, "that he was wise by nature," which he himself explains, of his "being ingenious from his childhood," Nub. v. 875. *Ælian* describing the national enmity between the Trojans and Greeks, says, "they were enemies by nature," Var. Hist. l. 3. c. 22. i. e. "bred up in a national enmity and inveterate hatred to one another;" and St. Paul says, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair it is 'a shame to him,'" 1 Cor. xi. 14. i. e. 'the practice of nations, and the general sense of mankind.' And speaking of the Heathens, he says, Rom. ii. 14. "That the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," i. e. 'by the plain reason of their own minds, or the natural instinct of their consciences, even without the assistance of any revealed law from God.'

In like manner the best writers of Greece and Rome speak of the characters of nations in general. *Josephus* saith of the Pharisees, 'They are by nature gentle in their punishments:' *Isocrates*, of the Persians, 'That they are men exceedingly corrupt by nature:' *Herodian*, 'That the Barbarians are covetous by nature:' *Cicero*, of the Lacedemonians, 'That their virtue was strengthened both by nature and discipline:' And *Livy*, 'That the nature of some nations inclines them to anger, others to boldness, others to fear, others to lust, others to wine.' So that by nature, men are of very different and contrary dispositions, some naturally inclined to particular virtues; others to particular vices. A thousand instances more of this kind may be brought to demonstrate, that by "nature," is meant either the prevailing disposition of nations and particular persons, which their particular genius leads them to, or which they have been formed into by early education, immemorial custom, and prevailing example.

And thus also both Jews and Gentiles were by nature children of wrath, because trained up, and educated in, and thereby addicted to, even from their birth, those vices and sins, which wherever they are indulged, expose men to the displeasure and wrath of God. "Their being children of wrath" was evidently, in the apostle's account, the effect only of their corruptions and idolatries. As these corruptions and idolatries were national, fixed by the general education, and propagated age after age, they are said to be natural, or by nature; and for this reason Jews and Gentiles, as far as chargeable with them, and brought up in them, were as naturally children of wrath.

of

of all spiritual blessings, and of the intire scheme of the redemption of mankind: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.” From him primarily flow that grace and peace, which virtually comprehend every other privilege of the Christian state, ver. 2. To the good-pleasure of his will the Gentiles owe their election from before the foundation of the world, and their predestination to the adoption of children, or their being constituted his church and people; even to his pleasure and counsels, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, ver. 4, 5, 6, 11. It is owing to the riches of the Father’s grace, that we have redemption even the forgiveness of sins, ver. 7. It is from his bounty and goodness that we have received that abundant communication of knowledge and wisdom, which acquaints us with his secret and eternal purposes, in reference to the salvation of the world; and on him are we dependent for the encrease of our divine and spiritual knowledge, and for a more thorough understanding of our duty and privileges as Christians, ver. 8, 9, 17, 18. compared. It is his good-pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that hath united Jews and Gentiles, who believe in him, into one society and church; yea, that hath united heaven and earth, the good angels above, and all sincere Christians below, into one household and family, under one common head, ver. 10. It is he who fixed, and brought on by the course of his Providence, that fulness of time, when this important event, this noble union, should take place, ver. 10. It was by the orderance of his Providence, that the Jews and Gentiles were actually called to the hearing and belief of the gospel of Christ, and constituted the proper lot of his inheritance by faith; even by the disposals of his power and wisdom, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, ver. 11, 13. It was by the efficacy of his almighty power, that Christ himself was raised from the dead: It was his sovereign pleasure that exalted him to the right hand of power; the seat and station of dignity next to himself; far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, and which hath put all things under his feet, and hath in an especial manner made him head over all things to the church, that he might enrich the members of it with all spiritual and divine gifts; and it is by the same Almighty power with which he thus raised and exalted Christ, that the future resurrection of Christians must be accomplished, when they shall be put into full possession of the purchased inheritance, ver. 19—23. These are distinguishing characters of God the Father, asserted of him in the most plain and exprefs terms, in this passage of scripture.

And upon these accounts he is with great propriety styled, not only God by way of eminence, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 3. and simply without any addition, the very God of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 17. an expression so plain and significant, as that no explication can add any thing to it; and no wonder, that being thus the God of Christ himself, and the supreme and original source of all the benefits of redemption, and in particular the fountain of all truth and knowledge; no wonder he should be farther styled, ‘The Father of glory;’ that infinitely and unsearchably glorious Being, who is the Author of all good, and the centre of perfection and happiness.

The APOSTLE farther declares concerning our LORD JESUS CHRIST :

That grace and peace are also from him, ver. 2. because the Father hath graciously bestowed on us, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in and through this beloved, ver. 3, 6.; God having given him to be Head over all things to the church, that he might fill all the members of it with spiritual and eternal blessings, ver. 23. Our election from before the foundation of the world to the privileges of the gospel, and our predestination to the adoption of children, both related to Christ, and were actually to take place by and through him, ver. 4, 5, 6. Our redemption from the power of vice, and that forgiveness of sins, by which the Gentiles were reconciled to God, and constituted his people, was in and by Jesus Christ, ver. 7. By him as the great Prophet of God, and the common Instructor of mankind, the mysteries or secret purposes of the Divine will, in reference to our salvation, were discovered to the world: under him, the fulness of time, and the last and best dispensation of God, actually took place; and by him alone, Jews and Gentiles, Heaven and Earth, were reconciled to each other, and constituted the members of the same family, ver. 9, 10. Faith in him as the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, was the great condition of the adoption and salvation of mankind; and as the immediate effect of thus believing in him, the Spirit was given in his extraordinary gifts, to testify with men's spirits that they were the sons of God, ver. 13, 14. The future blessings we expect, and the heavenly inheritance we hope for as Christians, are his purchase, and obtained for us by his death, ver. 7, 14. And as he thus died, so he was raised up again from the dead, by the influence of the mighty power of God; and being raised from the dead, he was exalted to the heavenly glory, advanced to the highest seat of honour next God his Father, the whole hierarchy of heaven being subjected to him, and the church on earth put under his government, protection, and care, to be guided only by his laws, and enriched by his blessings; which hereby becomes his proper complement and fulness, as it constitutes him King over a real kingdom, a proper Lord over numerous subjects, and a Living Head over a regularly-formed, a well-compacted, and closely-united Body. But farther, we are informed concerning

The HOLY SPIRIT :

That it was the great promise of God under the Old Testament dispensation, and repeated under the New by Christ to his holy apostles; that the extraordinary gifts of it were poured out as the effect of believing in Christ, and as an attestation to the truth of his doctrine; that it was the seal or impression that God put on the primitive Christians, to distinguish them as his people, and seal to them the certainty of their adoption; and that it was given them as the pledge of their future inheritance, and as the earnest and first part of that blessedness they were called to the hope of, by the gospel of Christ, ver. 13, 14.

Of the CHURCH.

The apostle declares that it consists of Jews and Gentiles, of all persons, without exception, who believe in Christ, and embrace the gospel; that they are his
O proper

proper body, and constitute his fulness; that it is subject unto him only as its proper Head and Lord, and is to receive influence and direction from him alone; that all its fulness of saving blessings, and all the various gifts of its several members, are of his conferring, and derived from that superior fulness, which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him, ver. 10. 22. 23.

AS TO ELECTION and PREDESTINATION:

They consist, as laid down in this chapter, only in God's eternal purpose to call the idolatrous Gentiles, without any conformity to the law of Moses, to be partakers of the privileges and promises of the Messiah's kingdom; and not in the absolute and unconditional choice of particular persons, exclusive of the rest of mankind, to final and certain salvation. And this election of the Gentiles is assigned wholly to the grace and mercy, the favour and good-pleasure of God, which indeed is the only true reason that can be given by any one, ver. 4, 5, 11.

AS TO ADOPTION.

The true notion of it in this passage, is not such a choice of particular men to this character, and the inheritance attending it, as necessarily and infallibly secures it; but the introducing persons by faith into the privileges of the church, the freeing them from the obligations of their past guilt, and granting them the promise, and raising them to the hopes, of an heavenly inheritance, upon their perseverance in their Christian faith and obedience, ver. 5. 7. 11. 13.

AS TO THE GOSPEL.

It is here described under the excellent character of the word of truth, being the word of that God who cannot lie, and confirmed by his immediate testimony; and as the gospel of our salvation, which contains the doctrine and promise of it, and directs us in the only infallible way how we may obtain and secure it, ver. 13.

AS TO THE RESURRECTION.

The apostle declares its certainty, and that it shall be wrought by the exertion of that same power, by which Christ himself was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God. This is the great hope of our Christian calling, and that glorious inheritance which God hath reserved for his saints, ver. 18, 19, 20. These are the principal points of Doctrine taught here by the apostle.

THE DUTY of CHRISTIANS is also thus described:

Their general character is that of "Saints," and "faithful in Christ Jesus," ver. 1.; to teach them the obligations of their Christian profession. They were chosen to be the members of the church of God, that they should be holy, without blame, and of an universal love and charity, ver. 4. They should live in a constant grateful acknowledgment of the grace and favour of God manifested to them, in his eternal purpose to reconcile them to himself, and elect them into his family; for the advantages of the gospel, for the remission of sins, for the promise of their future

ture inheritance, and their hopes of a resurrection to eternal life. They should acknowledge the freedom of God's grace in these benefits, and live to his praise.

Finally, they should consider God as the Father of glory, and Fountain of all spiritual knowledge and truth, and the Giver of every good gift; and address their most serious and fervent prayers to him, for that instruction they want, and that they may grow in the knowledge, and be confirmed in the belief of the great realities of a future state: He is both able and willing to communicate spiritual knowledge and wisdom; and therefore "if any man want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, &c." Ja. i.

The apostle having, in the three first verses of this chapter, put the Ephesians in mind of their sad and deplorable condition, by reason of those vices which they were under the power of, and those influences of evil spirits to which they were subject; proceeds to set before them their obligations to the Divine mercy and goodness, in their recovery to the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue by the gospel of Christ.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

4, 5 <i>But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us; even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with</i>	But God, whose mercy is infinite and unchangeable, through that abundant love wherewith he favoured us, was pleased, even whilst we were in this miserable state of bondage to sin, and subject to the influences of wicked spirits, to quicken and recover us
--	---

Ver. 4. *God who is rich in mercy.*] i. e. exceedingly bountiful and liberal in the exercise of mercy. And in this metaphorical sense, the words "rich" and "riches" are used by the best writers. Lucian speaks of the 'πλετες φιλοσοφιας, the riches of philosophy.' The Roman Orator frequently speaks of 'the riches of the mind,' by which he means those excellencies of understanding and virtue, which are the peculiar ornaments and riches of it. De Orat. 1. So the apostle means here, the infinite benignity of the Divine Nature, and his unchangeable disposition to be merciful.

His great love wherewith he loved us.] "Loving with love increaseth" the emphasis and force of the expression. Cicero hath an expression exactly parallel: *Cura, ut me ames amore illo tuo singulari.* Fam. Ep. 1. 15. "Be sure you love me with your singular and peculiar love." An allowed beauty in a prophane author should not be censured as a tautology in a sacred one.

Ver. 5. *Hath quickened us together with Christ.*] i. e. "Made us alive, caused us to revive from the death of sin, in like manner, and by as wonderful an interposition, as he quickened and restored to life Christ himself after he was put to death by the Jews."

By grace ye are saved.] Some copies read: "By whose grace ye are saved," which makes the discourse better connected. For the sentence will then run thus: "*Hath quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace or goodness ye are saved:* For ye know the grace of Christ, how that he became poor, that we, by his poverty, might become rich:" or else they are a parenthesis, and refer to God the Father; and are added by way of emphasis, more strongly to affirm, and impress on them, this important truth: That the whole of their recovery from their corrupt state, as Gentiles, to the knowledge, purity and privileges of the Christian Church, was owing entirely to the undeserved mercy and goodness of God.

with Christ. By grace ye are saved.

6 *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;*

7 *That, in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ.*

8 *For by grace ye are saved through*

us from this state of death, even as he quickened Christ himself after he was put to death, thus bringing us into a state of salvation merely by his grace.

And as he raised him up to a new and divine life, and advanced him to his own right hand in the heavenly glory; so hath he raised us to a new and spiritual life, and thereby constituted us through Christ fellow-heirs with him of this heavenly glory, making us citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and bringing us into a state of friendship and union with the blessed inhabitants of that celestial city;

That, in these last ages of the world, this last dispensation of God under the Messiah, he might manifest to mankind the abundant riches of his own mercy and grace, by that unmerited goodness which he hath exercised towards us, through Christ, in thus bringing us by his gospel to repentance and salvation.

For it is unquestionably by the mere grace and favour

Ver. 6. *And hath raised us up together.*] i. e. raised us out of that state of moral spiritual death, we were formerly in, and recovered us to the knowledge and practice of true religion, so that henceforward we should not live to sin; even as Christ was raised from the dead, by the power of the Father, never to die more*.

And made us sit together in heavenly places.] To sit near, or in the presence of great persons, hath been always esteemed a mark of friendship and honour: and thus our being seated in heavenly places seems to denote the great dignity of our Christian profession; the right we have to enter into the habitations of heavenly glory, and the state of friendship into which we are brought with God himself, and all the inhabitants of that blessed world; even as Christ himself sat down at the right hand of God in heavenly places. As he, by his being constituted Lord and Head over the angels above, and Christians below, hath united both into one kingdom and family; so, when he sat down on his throne, and thus gathered heaven and earth into one society, we are said properly "to sit down with him in heavenly places;" not only as we have in him a right to the heavenly state, but as we are actually declared the heirs of heaven, made citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, invested with a full title to all the glorious privileges of it, and made fellow-servants, citizens, companions and friends with the angels of God, who have their station and dwelling there.

Ver. 7. *That in the ages to come.*] Grotius understands by these words, the time after the resurrection, when we shall actually obtain what we now hope for. This is true, but I think, not the truth in this place. I rather apprehend that he means, those ages of the present world, that were to follow this conversion of the Gentiles. The times under the Messiah are styled in scripture, "the kingdom that is to come," Mark xi. 10. "the ages to come," Heb. vi. 5. "and the world to come," Heb. ii. 5. And thus in the place before us: "God was pleased to quicken, and raise up the very Gentiles who believed, that, in the ages to come, during all the successive ages of the world, they might stand as a demonstration of the acceptableness of faith to God, and of his fixed purposes of mercy and grace towards all, without exception, that should anywise receive and obey the gospel." The conversion of the Gentiles, by the ministry of the apostles, was a great instance of God's goodness to them, and a standing proof throughout all future ages, of the certainty of God's favour to all who should believe to the end of time. And thus the apostle hath proved to the Ephesian converts, from the consideration of their former corrupt and miserable state, that they were wholly indebted to the divine mercy for their recovery and salvation. In the four following verses he sums up the whole in very expressive terms:

Ver. 8. *For by grace ye are saved through faith.*] "Ye are saved" cannot here mean, that they

* *Exaltatus* is frequently used in this transitive sense. See *Ælian*. V. H. l. 12. c. 1. p. 715. et l. 7. c. 1.

through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

9 *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus*

favour of God, that persons in such a state of corruption as ye were in, should receive the promise, and be raised to the hopes, of eternal salvation, by your believing the gospel of Christ; it is not owing to any merit or worthiness in you: no, it is the grant only of the Divine goodness.

It is not owing to the goodness and virtue of your former actions, by which you, or any other person can boast, that you have deserved so great a favour at the hands of God.

No: as converted from our sins, and recovered from the power of evil spirits, we are the workman-ship

were actually made partakers of the heavenly eternal salvation, and therefore the expression must be restrained to the subject of which the apostle is speaking. And I think it is plain, that the salvation here spoken of is opposed to the "being dead in trespasses and sins," and therefore consists in their being "raised and quickened with Christ," i. e. 'brought to the knowledge and profession of true religion,' and "being made to sit down with him in heavenly places;" i. e. 'entitled to all the privileges of the church and family of God.' This is a real salvation: and their being brought into this happy state by their believing the gospel, is the fullest proof that this salvation was owing to the divine mercy; and that they themselves had no hand in effecting this their wonderful deliverance. As the apostle adds:

And that not of yourselves.] These words are frequently interpreted of faith, as though the apostle asserted; "and this faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." But though it be true, that our faith, as Christians, may, in a very good and proper sense, be said to be "the gift of God," yet I think it is evident, that this is not the apostle's meaning in this place; for the word *ταυτο* *this* is neutral, and cannot possibly agree with the feminine word *πιστις* *faith*; and again, the word *ταυτο* *this*, must be referred to the ninth verse. This is not of works. This what? This faith is not of works? This is an expression unknown to the epistles of St. Paul, and carries in it but little light or information. The plain meaning is, "Ye are saved by faith," *και ταυτο*, this very thing, viz. "Your salvation by faith is not of yourselves, you were dead in trespasses," and therefore could not quicken and raise up yourselves. No: "Your salvation is the gift of God, who, by the preaching of the gospel, hath inspired you with the principle of a new life, and raised you to a new and lively hope." He adds:

Ver. 9. *Not of works.*] i. e. 'This, your salvation, was not owing to the merits of any good actions you did before your conversion; it was not conferred on you as the reward of your former virtue;' "for ye walked according to the course of this world, in the lust of the flesh, and were children of wrath, even as others." *Lest any man should boast, ινα μη* *. It should have been rendered, "so that no one may boast:" thus the words are used, Luke ix. 45. "it was hid from them, so that they perceived it not." Thus it should have been rendered, Luke xvi. 28. and in other places: "How great soever your privileges as Christians are, neither Jews nor Gentiles have any reason to boast of yourselves, since they are all owing, not to you, but to the free and undeserved goodness of God."

Ver. 10. *For we are his workmanship.*] i. e. "what we are as Christians, that God hath made us: our reformation, faith, and privileges, are owing to his power and goodness." For thus the apostle explains it:

We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works.] The original word, which we render *create*, properly signifies to "produce" or "form any thing." Thus it is used by the best writers, for the building of walls and cities, the planting of groves, the making laws, the instituting feasts, Pind. pass. So that it is not strictly applied to what we mean by "creation," nor doth involve in it the notion of almighty and irresistible power. In like manner the Latin word *creare*, "to create," is used by Cicero, of many things, which are not effected by such an almighty and irresistible power. Thus he speaks of "creating" magistrates, dangers, calamities, and frauds; expressions, that plainly mean nothing more, than the erecting the one, and occasioning and being the author of the others.

* See Aristoph. Pl. V. 90, 91. Achar. v. 1051.

us unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.

ship of God, created and formed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, into the love and practice of those good works of true piety and virtue, which God had before prepared for the gospel dispensation, that we who are brought under it should abound in the constant practice of them.

II *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time passed Gentiles in the flesh, who are called*

And that I may impress on your hearts a grateful sense of this mercy and goodness of God towards you, let me put you in mind that, before your conversion,

Thus the apostle tells the Ephesians, "That they were God's workmanship." How? why, "because they were created in or by Christ Jesus to good works; brought by his gospel to the knowledge of true religion and virtue, and quickened, by the powerful motives and arguments contained in it, to obey, and live according to, the precepts thereof." The forming particular doctrines from metaphorical expressions, and straining similitudes to their utmost extent, is not to explain, but pervert the sense of writers, to make them speak in the most absurd and unintelligible manner, and to expose their meaning to ridicule and contempt. God's *creating us* therefore to good works "by Christ," means only his forming us into the knowledge and practice of acceptable religion by the gospel of Christ. And those good works he is farther said

Ibid. *To have foreordained that we should walk in them.*] The original word more properly signifies, to have "prepared." God prepared ordinances and statutes for his people the Jews, under the law by Moses, that they should observe and do them*. But under the gospel dispensation he intended a more excellent service, and chose us that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in Christ. These works, he prepared for the gospel dispensation, as what should supersede all ceremonial observances, are the good works of real piety and virtue, in the practice of which true religion doth properly consist, and by which alone men can secure their acceptance with God. He prepared them, as he intended they should take place under Christ, and as he calculated the whole of his religion to encourage and strengthen the practice of them.

Ver. 11. *Gentiles in the flesh.*] The apostle here begins a new argument to set before them, and illustrate the mercy of God in their conversion, by shewing them that God was under no previous obligation, by virtue of any special covenant he had entered into with them, to confer so great an happiness upon them; since they were wholly unacquainted with, and strangers to the only peculiar covenant he had entered into with any part of mankind, and who consequently could have no interest in the peculiar benefits of it.

They were Gentiles in the flesh.] i. e. "uncircumcised in the flesh," or as the words may be rendered, "Gentiles by the flesh, by their natural fleshly descent." So the word is used, in Rom. i. 3. "who was of the seed of David according to the flesh:" i. e. 'by his natural birth, and that body which God prepared for him, and which he received from the Virgin Mary.' This is opposed to the being descended from the seed of Abraham, whom God, by a special favour, constituted his peculiar people. *They were called the uncircumcision, by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands.* The Jews gloried in their circumcision, as it was a badge of their descent from Abraham the friend of God, and a token of their being interested in that covenant of peculiarity, which God made with him, and his posterity after him. Now, as the Gentiles wanted this mark, the haughty Jews called them, by way of contempt, The Uncircumcision; thereby implying, that they were destitute of every privilege, in which they imagined themselves interested, and of which they looked upon circumcision as a seal and mark; and yet, as this was a merely external ceremonial mark, the apostle speaks of it with great indifference and contempt. 'You were called' "the uncircumcision," says he, 'by that which is called' "the circumcision in the flesh;" 'by those who boast themselves of a ceremony which relates only to the body, but who are destitute of that nobler circumcision of the heart, which consists,' "in cutting off and casting away the sinful affections, passions, and habits of a corrupted mind;" 'a ceremony made with hands, which they have impressed on them by their parents hands, whilst they want that true spiritual circumcision, which is made not by human art or power, but by the principles of true religion, enabling men to put off their sinful desires, and the impurities of all fleshly and criminal lusts.' As the apostle explains it, Colos. ii. 11.

* Εἰς τοὺς οὐκ περιτομίσαντες. See Septuagint, Prov. xxiv. 27. Ps. lix. 4.

called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands:

12 *That, at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world.*

13 *But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar*

version, you, who were Gentiles born, and called by way of contempt, *the uncircumcision*, by the Jews who boasted of that external bodily circumcision they received from their fathers :

I say, you were at that time wholly ignorant of the Messiah, and the benefits of his kingdom ; aliens from, and without any interest in, the peculiar privileges of the Jewish commonwealth ; and strangers, who had no claim to those special promises, which the covenants God made with Abraham and the Jews contained ; and who therefore could not hope to be made partakers of those promises, being both ignorant of, and enemies by wicked works to, the true God, from whom those promises proceeded, equally with the rest of mankind.

But now how happy is your condition through the mercy of God, since you are converted to the faith of

Ver. 12. *At that time ye were without Christ.*] i. e. ‘ As Gentiles by birth, they had no knowledge of the Messiah, and the promised blessings of his kingdom, the description of his person, and the account of his government being given by the prophets only to the Jews ; so that their being called to the participation of the advantages they enjoyed under him was a favour unexpected as well as undeserved. *Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, they had no right of citizenship in the Jewish Polity, nor any claim to the privileges of citizens ; they were not natural members or subjects of that commonwealth, neither governed by its laws, nor capable of its honours and immunities. But

Strangers from the covenants of promise.] The word *Ξενοι* is used to denote foreigners, belonging to another country. Such were all the Gentiles with respect to the Jewish commonwealth, and therefore had nothing to do with, no manner of interest in, those covenants God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and afterwards with their seed, at Mount Sinai, by Moses ; in which covenants were many peculiar promises, which aliens and foreigners, persons who lived under other states, the subjects of other kingdoms, had no lot or portion in. The consequence of this was farther,

They were without hope.] i. e. ‘ Without any hope of those blessings which the promises, made by these covenants, contained ; without hope of being justified by faith, as Abraham was, and being accepted as the seed and children of God, and entitled to the portion, and inheritance of a resurrection to eternal life.’ And the great reason of this was, that

They were without God in the world.] It was the peculiar honour and happiness of the Jews, that Jehovah was their God, and that which was the foundation of all their other privileges. Thus Moses : “ Thou hast avouched Jehovah this day to be thy God ; and Jehovah hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people ; to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour, that thou mayest be an holy people unto Jehovah thy God,” Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 19. Hence the Psalmist, “ Blessed is the nation, whose God is Jehovah, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance,” Psal. xxxiii.

12. “ For he was the Creator of the heavens and earth, the only living and true God.” Now the Gentiles were in this respect *αθεοι* without God. They either knew him not, or did not worship him as God ; they had not avouched, or solemnly owned, or taken him for their God ; and in consequence, were not avouched, were not owned, and blessed, and accepted by him as his peculiar people. This was their condition as Gentiles born.

Ver. 13. *But now in Christ Jesus.*] i. e. ‘ Since your conversion to the faith of Christ ; since you are translated from the kingdom of Satan, and are inserted into, and become the members of his church and kingdom, your state is happily altered.’

Ye who sometimes were afar off.] ‘ Or who were formerly, like foreigners and strangers of a far distant country, wholly separated from the Jewish covenant and commonwealth, and had no more benefit or advantage by either, than those who were born in the remotest nation :

afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. of Christ; inasmuch as even you, who were once aliens and strangers, are now, by the death of Christ, become the inheritance of God, constituted his people, and equally entitled to all the promises and blessings of the Messiah's kingdom with the Jews themselves.

REMARKS.

You cannot upon the whole but observe, how justly the apostle magnifies the riches of God's grace, in the calling and conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles, to the knowledge and belief of the gospel. How unexpected, how undeserved was this instance of the Divine goodness! And how permanent is the effect of it! it reaches even to us who are the posterity of the Gentiles: Had it not been for this mercy of God, in conveying down to us this sacred treasure of the gospel, all the Christian nations this day on the earth had been under the most deplorable circumstances of ignorance and idolatry; without hope and without God in the other world: Let us then thankfully acknowledge our great obligations, and not imitate the ingratitude of those, who have derived all the religious knowledge they have, from the revelation of Christ's gospel, and yet make the knowledge they pretend to have, the reason of rejecting it; and let us offer the sacrifice of praise not to ourselves but God, who by Jesus Christ hath instructed us in the knowledge of the nature of true religion, and excited us to the practice of it by the most powerful motives. Let us abound in those good works of substantial righteousness, which God hath prepared that we should walk in; for if we are not created and formed by the gospel of Christ into the love and practice of these, it signifies little what else we are formed into. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

The apostle having in the foregoing verses shewn the Ephesians, and put them in mind, that as Gentiles they were aliens from the commonwealth of the Jews, over which God presided as King and Governor, and consequently that they had no interest in the peculiar benefits and promises of that dispensation; had neither the knowledge of the true God, nor any claim to the protection and privileges of

Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.] Constituted the people of God, and entitled to all the promised blessings of the kingdom of the Messiah, equally with the Jews themselves. You have an interest in the same God with them, have equally avouched him for your God, and are therefore as fully entitled to his peculiar as they can be. The manner of expression is taken from the Septuagint version, Isa. lvii. 19. "Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near;" where the words are the same as in this passage of the apostle, who seems to allude to this prophecy, and to affirm that it was made good by the Gentiles being constituted the people of God, and restored to acceptance and peace with him. And this was effected

By the blood of Christ.] i. e. 'By means of his death, by which he established the Christian covenant, annulled the Jewish dispensation, and united both Jews and Gentiles, upon their belief of his gospel, into one body, investing them with a right to the same privileges, and thereby taking away every occasion of any farther separation and enmity between them:' as the apostle largely explains in the following verses of this chapter.

his

his people; proceeds to set before them the certainty of their reconciliation to God by their conversion to Christianity, and their being entitled to the peculiar privileges of his church equally with the Jews themselves, who for many ages before had been his chosen and favourite nation.

T E X T.

14 *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.*

P A R A P H R A S E.

For though the Jews alone were formerly his peculiar people, and would not permit the Gentiles to a participation of the same privileges of worship; yet Christ hath introduced and established a covenant of peace, and thereby reconciled both unto God, and made them one body, and church; having as it were taken down and wholly removed that wall, which separated the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles, into which it was unlawful for any stranger ever to enter:

15 *Having*

Having

Ver. 14. *For he is our peace.*] i. e. as it is expressed in the next verse, “he is the Maker or Author of our peace.” This is a frequent manner of expression in the sacred writings, to put the action or effect, for the author or cause: thus God saith to Abraham, Gen. xv. 1. *I am thy exceeding great reward*, i. e. ‘thy bountiful rewarder:’ and St. Paul, 1 Thes. ii. 20. *Ye are our glory and joy*, i. e. ‘the great occasions and causes of our glorying and rejoicing.’ The same form of speaking is used by profane authors with great elegance: Thus Horace calls Mecænas his patron,—*Præsidium et dulce decus*, i. e. ‘the author of his safety and honour.’

Who hath made both one.] i. e. united both Jews and Gentiles, (between whom there hath long been a division and enmity, upon account of their different religions and customs) by one faith, into one body; thereby entitling them both equally to the favour and acceptance of the same God, and laying a solid foundation for the sincerest affection and friendship to be established between them for the future.

Ibid. And hath taken down the middle wall of partition between us.] The apostle here shews how Christ is our peace, and how he hath made both Jews and Gentiles one, viz. by taking away the obligation of the Mosaic ceremonial law, which he compares to a partition-wall that divided them; or rather to that wall, which divided the two courts of the Jews and Gentiles from each other. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us*, that there were three large courts before the temple, each separated from the other by a wall: the first, that into which the priests only might enter; the second, that into which such only, who were circumcised, and in all respects Jews, were allowed to go; and the third court, that of the Gentiles, into which any person of any nation whatsoever might come: and that on one part of the wall, which separated the two courts of the Jews and Gentiles from each other, there was an inscription, forbidding all strangers to enter into that of the Jews, upon pain of death. Now the apostle, with great propriety, compares the Jewish law of ceremonies, to this wall that separated the two courts; because in reality this law was that which distinguished them from all other nations of the earth; a law, which the Jews were obliged to observe, and without an intire conformity to which no foreigner could possibly become a member of the Jewish commonwealth, nor be entitled to the privileges of it. So that this law of ceremonies was properly the partition-wall which kept the Jews and Gentiles from coalescing, or uniting into one church and people; from worshipping together, and partaking in common the privileges of God’s house and service: and therefore our blessed Saviour, by taking down this partition-wall, i. e. by cancelling the obligation of the Mosaic law, became our peace, and made both one; made both Jews and Gentiles equally the people of God, invested them with a right to the same privileges, enjoined them the same method of worship, gave them the same body of laws, and thus laid a foundation for their future union in the strictest bonds of affection and friendship: Nor is this method of speaking altogether unclassical; Lucian uses the same figurative manner of expression, Sympos. p. 648. And that by this wall of partition, the apostle means the Mosaic law of ceremonies, is plain from the next verse.

* Antiq. L. XV. § 5.

15 *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*

Having also by his death wholly made void the law of the Jewish commandments, which related to ceremonial observances, which being contrary to that of all other nations, was the great occasion of that mutual hatred which subsisted between them; that by thus removing the ground of their enmity, he might make peace between them, and form the two contending parties, differing before both in the object and modes of their worship, under himself and by

16 *And*

Ver. 15. *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.*] So that the taking down the middle wall of partition, is the same thing as abolishing the Mosaic law of commandments. He calls it the *law of commandments in ordinances*, because the law of Moses consisted of commandments, which enjoined ceremonial ordinances or observations. The words might have been rendered, 'the law of dogmatical or positive commandments:' The word *δωγμα* comes from a root, which signifies 'to seem good, or be agreeable to any one's pleasure;' and therefore it properly denotes a kind of arbitrary or positive injunction, that is founded in the will and pleasure of another: thus it is used of the decree of Augustus, Emperor of Rome, Luc. ii. 1. And of this kind were all the ceremonial commandments of the Jewish law; commandments, that had no obligation but the pleasure and authority of God. Of those ceremonial appointments, the apostle evidently uses this word, Colos. ii. 14. where he calls the Mosaic law, *the hand-writing in ordinances*; and at the twentieth verse he asks them, *If then ye are dead with Christ from worldly elements, why are ye subject to ordinances?* or, as the word signifies, 'why are ye followers of such maxims as these?' *Touch not, taste not, handle not?* * So that the Jewish ceremonies were such things as obliged *εφυσει αλλα νομω*, not naturally and in themselves, but by appointment and law; and therefore the apostle's calling them *dogmatical commandments*, is a just and proper description of them. This law the apostle calls

Ibid. The enmity.] i. e. 'the great occasion of the enmity between Jews and Gentiles:' And so it was in reality; thus one occasion of Haman's hatred to the Jews was, as he tells Ahasuerus, "that their laws were diverse from all people," Esth. iii. 8. Tacitus, the Roman historian tells us †, 'that Moses appointed them new rites, contrary to those of all other mortals, and that they accounted as prophane every thing that was held sacred by others; and that though they were faithful and compassionate to one another, yet that they cherished an hostile hatred towards all other men.' Diodorus Siculus accuses them ‡, that they were the only people of the world that were unsociable with others, and that they looked on them as enemies; and St. Paul who well knew them, says of them, "that they pleased not God, and were contrary to all men," 1 Thes. ii. 15. So that as the Jews through pride and insolence, because of the divine original of their law and commonwealth, were unsociable with, and enemies to, all other nations; they were in their turn hated by them for the difference of their religion, customs, and manners: so truly was their law the occasion of this mutual hatred between Jews and Gentiles. Now this enmity Christ removed, because

Ibid. He abolished in his flesh] that law of dogmatical commandments, which was the occasion of it, i. e. by taking away the future obligation of this law; so that the observation of it should be no longer necessary, nor any farther a distinction and mark of the people of God. He abolished it *by his flesh*; or, as it is in the next verse, *by the cross*, i. e. "by dying the death of the cross;" and thereby bringing in that everlasting righteousness, which Daniel prophesied of, and confirming that new covenant of God, which was to comprehend both Jews and Gentiles who should believe. As it follows:

To create in himself the two] viz. 'enemies or contending parties,' *into one new man, thus making peace*: this is the literal translation of the original. The Jews and Gentiles are here compared to two men at enmity with one another, upon account of their different religions and customs: Christ, by abrogating the Jewish law, is said to form them into *one man*, i. e. 'to bring them into such a state of friendship, as though they were animated by one common spirit, and to render them henceforth as inseparable in affection from each other, as a man is from himself;' viz. by bringing each of them to the belief of new principles, and to a new method of religion and worship; whereby they constituted *one new man*, being as different from their former selves, as though they had been created intirely anew: In this manner he made peace between Jews and Gentiles.

* Diog. Laert. l. 2. § 16.

† Hist. l. 5. c. iv. v.

‡ Apud Grot. de Jur. Bel. p. 420.

by means of his gospel, into such a perfect agreement in the principles and practices of a new religion, as though they were become one and the same individual person, animated by one common heart and spirit.

16 *And that he might reconcile both unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*

And that, having thus united them to each other, and constituted them one body by means of one common faith and profession, he might farther reconcile them both to God, by dying as their common Saviour, and thereby prevent and wholly destroy every occasion of future jealousy and hatred, by rendering them equally the people of God, investing them with the same privileges, and interesting them in the same promises and hopes.

17 *And came and preached peace to you, who were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

This is the blessed effect of his appearance, and gospel, viz. that everlasting peace and reconciliation might be preached, and established for the future, between Jew and Gentile :

18 *For through him we both have an access by one spirit unto the Father.*

For we have both equally received the same spirit of adoption, declaring us to be equally the children of God ; by means of which we both have access to him,

19 *Now*

Ver. 16. *That he might reconcile both unto God.*] i. e. ‘ constitute them both equally his church and ‘ people, entitle them to the same privileges, and make them heirs of the same hope and salvation.’ This is spoken of the Gentiles and Jews in general ; and consequently the reconciliation itself is national, and respects them as a body, and was consequent upon their faith, or their profession, and belief of Christianity. It properly respects the alteration of their external character and state, and their being entitled to those special benefits, of which the Jews had no promise in their law, and of which the idolatrous Gentiles could have no possible knowledge or hope, before their conversion to the faith of Christ.

In one body.] i. e. ‘ By forming them into one society ;’ in which metaphorical sense the Greek word is used, as is likewise the Latin word *Corpus*. Thus Cicero * speaks of the *totum corpus reipublicæ*, the whole body of the commonwealth :’ and thus Christ constituted both Jews and Gentiles one body, one society, subject to himself, governed by the same laws, and united in the same object and method of worship ; and so destroyed the enmity “ by his cross ;” took away the occasion of it ; since nothing could be a stronger argument for their future agreement and friendship, than their being formed into one society, under the protection and worship of the same God.

Ver. 17. *He came and preached peace.*] i. e. ‘ by his coming into the world, and abolishing the ‘ ceremonial law by his death, and by that gospel which he commissioned his apostles to preach, he ‘ caused peace to be proclaimed amongst all nations and persons without exception who should ‘ believe and obey him.’

Ver. 18. *For through him we have both an access to the Father.*] When the children of Israel came to Sinai, God ordered Moses to say to them, “ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how “ I bare you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself ;” where the word is the same, as in the verse before us, Exod. xix. 4. i. e. ‘ caused you to approach and come near me as the people whom ‘ I honour and love.’ Admission to the friendship and palaces of Princes is a great privilege and honour ; but it is a much higher honour that Christianity confers upon all who believe it, in that it gives them access to the eternal Father, viz. by introducing them into his church, and constituting them members of his household and family ; “ for to as many as believed, to them gave he power to be- “ come the children of God.” And this access to the Father both Jews and Gentiles had,

By one Spirit.] i. e. ‘ by those extraordinary gifts of the same Spirit, which were the evidence ‘ of their adoption, and were poured out upon the Gentiles as well as the Jews, to bear witness with ‘ their spirits that they were the children of God.’

* De Offic. lib. 1.

19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God :*

20 *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*

21 *In*

him, worshipping him as our common Father, and being entitled to the same reward and inheritance from him.

Wherefore, notwithstanding your former state, or the reproaches that may be thrown on you by the proud and envious Jews, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, who have no right in, or claim to, the privileges of God's kingdom and church ; but citizens of the new Jerusalem, and entitled to the immunities and honours of it equally with other Christians, and constituted the denizens or freemen of God, yea members of his household and family.

And thus are ye formed into one city and commonwealth, upon the immoveable foundation of the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ, since that gospel of your salvation which they preach, they have received by immediate revelation from him ; who, by uniting both Jews and Gentiles under himself, may justly be compared to the first and chief corner-stone of a building, which firmly supports, binds

Ver. 19. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners.*] This is said in direct opposition to what he had declared these Ephesians to have been in their former state, ver. 13. They were then *estranged from the commonwealth of Israel* ; but now, viz. as Christians, *they are no longer ξενoi*, excluded from the rights of citizens, as travellers and strangers of other nations, but *made fellow-citizens with the saints*. The Church of God is compared to a city or republic, which hath its peculiar immunities, rights, and privileges ; and of this city all, who believe in Christ, are equally free, of whatsoever nation or country they may be : they are no more *παροικοι*, i. e. mere dwellers or lodgers in a city, without enjoying the freedom of it, but the proper denizens of it, yea such as belong to the very house and family of God, the universal Lord and Father. The word *οικετος* is used in both senses, to denote a domestic, and one who is a freeman in opposition to a stranger or foreigner.

Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.] The original word we render, *being built*, is used figuratively to denote the building, i. e. 'forming and constituting a republic or city ;' so that this city or commonwealth of Christians is built, i. e. 'erected and formed upon the foundation of the apostles,' i. e. 'the doctrine revealed to them by the Spirit of God, who made known to them the mystery of calling in the idolatrous Gentiles, and uniting them, upon their faith, without any conformity to the law of Moses, into one society and church with the Jews themselves.' They are also said to be built upon the foundation of the prophets, i. e. 'the doctrine of the prophets of the christian Church,' as evidently appears from chap. iii. ver. 5. to whom also it was revealed by the same Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel.

Of this building Christ is the chief corner-stone ;] according to that ancient prophecy, Ps. cxviii. 22. "the stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner." The strength of buildings lies in their angles ; and the corner-stone is that which unites and compacts the different sides of them ; the chief corner-stone is that which is laid at the foundation, upon which the whole angle or coin of the building rests, and which therefore is the principal support and tie of the whole edifice : It is therefore with great propriety, that the apostles and prophets are said to be the foundation of this structure of the city and church of God, since it was erected upon the doctrine which they taught, and the certainty of their having it by divine revelation : however Christ is the chief corner-stone ; the main stress of this spiritual building lies and rests upon him, who by his death hath united Jews and Gentiles, the two different constituent parts of it, into one compact, regular building, and temple.

Ver.

21 *In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*

22 *In whom also you are builded together for an habitation*

binds and holds together the two different parts of it, and thus renders it one intire edifice.

And thus this spiritual building of the church of God, though consisting of very different and disagreeing parts, yet being rightly fitted, disposed, and exactly framed by his gospel, so as to correspond to, and unite with, each other, rises up and grows into an holy temple, under the inspection of and sacred to the Lord.

Of this heavenly temple you Gentiles are an essential part: For God dwells even in you, by those extraor-

Ver. 21. *In whom all the building fitly framed together.*] The materials of a building, in their original form, are shapeless and disagreeing, and could never constitute an edifice, at least nothing more than a very deformed, irregular, and unlovely frame, till wrought and fashioned by the art and labour of the workmen, fitted in size and shape for their proper places, and firmer conjunction: and what more unlikely, than that Jews and Gentiles should ever be brought to coalesce and join in one society, and constitute one church, between whom there had been so long and inveterate an opposition and hatred; and who seemed at the utmost distance from agreement and mutual friendship? But in Christ they were fitly framed; his gospel, and doctrine, and spirit so altered and fashioned them, that they became capable of settling and joining together, and, in their several places, of contributing to the proportion, harmony, strength, and beauty of this sacred temple, which it pleased God to erect out of them. Notwithstanding the enmity of their former state, and though they would willingly have destroyed each other; yet, under the power and skill of the Redeemer, they arose, upon him as their proper foundation, out of their common ruins, a regular and stately temple, consecrated to God, and honoured with his presence.

Ver. 22. *In or by whom you also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*] The Jews boasted that the temple of God was only amongst them, and that they only were favoured with the symbols of his presence. But as the gospel was designed for raising a nobler temple to God, than that material one at Jerusalem built with human hands, even to erect men themselves into a spiritual and living temple to God, it was fit that they should have the sacred tokens of his presence with them, that they might know that God dwelt amongst them, and had appropriated them to his worship; and accordingly the Spirit, in all his extraordinary gifts, was poured out upon the first Christians, that hereby they might have an irresistible proof that God had accepted them, and taken possession of them for himself: this is what the apostle plainly intends by the words, "Ye are an habitation of God through the Spirit," i. e. 'the Spirit that is given you, in those miraculous gifts which ye have received in consequence of your faith and conversion, is as full an evidence that God dwells in, is present with, and hath accepted you, as the cloud and glory were demonstrations of his presence in the material tabernacle or temple, and that the worship there offered him was acceptable to him.' And as these gifts of the Spirit were indifferently given to the believing uncircumcised Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; it was full proof that God put no difference between them, but that as each of them were hereby consecrated to God, so they were equally accepted by him, and under his protection.

I shall farther observe, how justly the apostle compares the christian church to a city or commonwealth, since it hath its proper immunities and privileges, in which none but the members of it can share, and since every member of it hath the same body of statutes or laws to regulate his conduct, are all engaged in one common interest, should be united in one heart and affection, and actually live under the protection of the same Head, Governor, and Lord. And it should be farther observed, how the apostle insensibly and yet naturally slides into another similitude, comparing the same church to a Temple; συναρμολογῶν aptly joining or connecting the two similitudes together by a word, συνοικοδομεῖσθε, which in its metaphorical sense is used by the best writers, to denote the erecting or forming a commonwealth or city, and in its original sense to signify the raising or forming any material building; and the joining these two similitudes together, will yet appear more artful and beautiful, if we consider, that the same Spirit which was given them, as the proof of their having received the freedom of this heavenly city, was also as evident a proof of God's peculiar presence with them, i. e. of their being the temples of God in whom he dwelt, and over which he presided, which is the proper and distinguishing notion of a temple.

tation of God through the Spirit. extraordinary gifts of his Holy Spirit, which is the sure evidence of his acceptance and immediate presence.

REMARKS.

Such is the happiness and glory of every sincere and upright Christian, that he is under the immediate protection of God, and favoured with his presence and acceptance. The dispositions of piety and virtue which possess his mind, the comforts of religion, the satisfactions of a good conscience, the hopes of glory which fill his breast, and his increasing disposition and meetness for that glory he expects, are the sure evidences of the divine favour and grace, that he is in a state of friendship and acceptance with God, and hath a right to all the invaluable privileges of his heavenly kingdom. Let us therefore in all things behave as the citizens of an heavenly state, living by the laws to which as Christians we are immediately subject, cultivating that sincere affection to all our fellow-citizens, which becomes those who have one common interest and hope, and preserving ourselves free from all those moral impurities which defile the temple of God, tend to deprive it of the honour of his presence, and which must render all the sacrifices offered in it unacceptable to him, and unavailable to our own comfort and happiness.

The apostle having, in the foregoing part of this epistle, very fully declared that it was the eternal purpose of God, to call the Gentiles to be partakers of the privileges of his church, proceeds in this chapter to speak of the dignity of his own apostolic character and office, and of the extraordinary manner by which he was called to, and fitted for it, that hereby he might not only give them a fuller assurance of the truth of the doctrine he had laid down, but prevent their being offended and prejudiced against him, upon account of those persecutions and sufferings to which he was exposed. His first entrance on this subject is extremely apposite and engaging.

TEXT.

CHAP. III.

1 *For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.*

2 *If*

PARAPHRASE.

Upon this account because I have constantly preached and maintained this doctrine, I Paul am a prisoner in behalf of Jesus Christ for the sake of you Gentiles, to whom especially I am made a minister and an apostle.

For

Ver. 1. *For this cause.*] i. e. 'Because I have constantly maintained, that by Christ, you Gentiles are reconciled to God, are constituted members, and made partakers of the privileges of his church, equally with the Jews themselves; for this cause only,

I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.] The verb should have been added, 'I Paul, am a prisoner,' δεσμιος, 'a bondsman; not for any evil that I have done, but a bondsman of Jesus Christ, a bondsman for preaching the doctrine of him, to whom your recovery from the vices and misery of your Gentile state is owing: and not only so, but I am a bondsman'

For you Gentiles.] viz. 'because I will not betray your liberties, nor consent to your being enslaved to the bondage of the Jewish law.' Every word hath its weight, and it is scarce possible that more affectionate and moving arguments can be heaped together in so very short a compass of words.

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward.

For you have already been informed and duly apprised of the wise and merciful appointment of God's providence, in that peculiar favour which he was pleased to confer on me, for your instruction and benefit.

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery as I wrote afore in few words :

For he made known to me by an immediate revelation from himself, this great mystery of your being brought into his church, and obtaining an inheritance in all the privileges of it; as in the foregoing part of this epistle I have briefly explained to you :

4 Whereby

And

Ver. 2. *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God.*] From this passage Dr. Mills and others think it very plain, that this epistle was written to the Laodiceans, and not to the Ephesians; because, as they imagine, this expression, *if ye have heard*, which implies uncertainty and doubt, could not agree to the Ephesians, amongst whom the apostle conversed near three years, and who, as Dr. Mills expresses it, 'must have heard St. Paul six hundred times preaching on this subject, within that compass of time.' But I apprehend that there is but little weight and strength in this argument: for St. Paul had in the former part of this very letter given them a full account of this dispensation of the grace of God, and consequently could not be supposed to make it a matter of doubt, whether they had heard of this dispensation or no, after he himself had so abundantly informed them concerning it. The truth is, that the particle *Εἴ γε*, which we render IF, will bear, and ought to have a very different translation; as not to denote any thing of doubt, but to be a kind of affirmation of the thing spoken of. The particle signifies, in the best writers, *since, inasmuch as, for, and the like* *; and thus I think it should be rendered in the fourth chapter, and twenty-first verse of this epistle; "Ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, [rather, *since* you have heard his gospel, and been instructed in the truths of it.]" And this also appears plainly to be the sense in the place before us: "I Paul am the prisoner of Christ, for you Gentiles, *for* you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given to me, to you ward. You know I am constituted peculiarly your apostle, and that my persecutions are owing to the gospel I preach to you:" And this interpretation wholly removes the objection, and seems rather to be an argument, that the persons the apostle wrote to, had full information of the nature and end of his office, and therefore agrees well with the circumstances of the Ephesian church.

The dispensation of the grace of God.] This dispensation seems to be that particular office in the Christian church, to which this apostle was immediately called; and he styles it a *dispensation of grace*, because it was a very great honour and signal favour to him, and because the design of it was extremely beneficial and favourable to the Gentiles, to whom he was sent. And that this is the meaning, appears from the following verses.

Ver. 3. *How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery.*] The apostle calls the conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles, and their being made, by faith, without circumcision, members of the church of Christ, emphatically "the mystery." "The mystery of God's will," Eph. i. 9. "the mystery that was hid from ages in God," iii. 9. because this was the secret purpose of God, not fully understood by the Jews themselves, nor in the least known by the Gentiles. He also calls it "the mystery of Christ," iii. 4. and "the mystery of the gospel," vi. 19. because it was the great subject of which the gospel treated, and which was intended to be discovered and brought to full light thereby; and therefore this great event is called "a mystery," in reference to what it was before the gospel was preached, an unknown and unrevealed thing; and not because it contained an unknown and obscure matter after the gospel revelation took place: for our apostle expressly asserts:

That by revelation *he made known to me the mystery.*] God was pleased immediately, by an extraordinary revelation directly from himself, and not by the information of any of those who were apostles before St. Paul, fully to acquaint him with this his eternal purpose of mercy towards the Gentiles. So that, though it had been long a mystery, a secret locked up in the breast of God,

* Aelian. V. H. 9, 8. | 3, 17, p. 241. | 12. 25.

which

4 *Whereby when ye read
ye may understand my know-
ledge in that mystery of Christ,*

And by which, if you read with care, you may be able plainly to discern, that I fully understand this secret purpose of the Divine goodness, which was to be accomplished under Christ :

5 *Which in other ages was
not made known to the sons of
men,*

Which, though foretold by the ancient prophets, yet was not revealed with that fulness and clearness to

which the world knew nothing of, yet it was no longer a mystery to the apostle. The knowledge of it was the very favour dispensed to St. Paul ; and for this very reason, that he might be the instrument of accomplishing this purpose of God, by bringing the Gentiles to the knowledge and favour of God by faith. So that wherever the gospel came, this mystery was cleared up, and every church gathered from amongst the Gentiles, opened it to the world, and was indeed a real accomplishment of it.

As I wrote before in few words.] Or, as the words may be rendered, *As I have a little before wrote to you :* but the difference is not material. I know not why our translators have included these words and the following verse in a parenthesis, when they may be very well read as a continued sentence : the whole former part of this letter being an excellent account and explication of the nature of this mystery of which he is speaking. And it is to this mystery, and not to God's revealing it immediately to him, that the apostle refers in the words, *according as I have wrote a little before to you.*

Ver. 4. *Whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* It should have been rendered emphatically *in that mystery of Christ*, or of the gospel of Christ, to connect it with the following verse: *whereby* * i. e. ' by which account in the first part of this letter,' *ye may understand my knowledge*, i. e. ' evidently see how fully I am acquainted with that mystery which was unknown ' in former generations.' These words also, Dr. Mills imagines, do by no means agree to the Ephesians, who, as he says, ' could not need to read this or another part of this letter, or the whole ' of it, to inform themselves of the apostle's knowledge in this mystery of Christ, who had it so often ' explained to them by the very mouth of the apostle.' But if this observation proves any thing, it proves too much, viz. that St. Paul never needed to have written any Epistle to any of those churches he had preached to in person ; because they must be supposed to have been fully instructed by his preaching, and so not to have needed the same thing to be taught them by letter. Such kind of observations carry in them but little argument and strength. As the apostle was now absent from these Ephesians, he fully lays before them the doctrine he had taught them whilst present with them, for their future establishment and confirmation in their faith and hope, as Christians ; and lets them know, that the reading of what he had now written to them, would always be sufficient to convince them, that he had taught them nothing but what he had fully understood, whatever objections might be raised to his character as an apostle, or the doctrine he had constantly and uniformly preached to them : and this was a very proper intimation to these Ephesians, whom he expressly foretold, that, after his departure, men should arise from themselves, " speaking perverse things, " to draw away disciples after them," Acts xx. 30. The giving them therefore an account of the doctrine he had taught, and exhorting them to read it, was an instance of the apostle's care for them, but no argument that he had never seen them.

Ver. 5. *In other ages was not made known to the sons of men.*] The calling of the Gentiles to be the people of God, was frequently foretold by the prophets under the Old Testament ; but yet it doth not seem to have been expressly asserted by any of them, that they should become God's people by faith only, without conformity to the law of Moses. It was the calling of the Gentiles in this manner that was the grand secret of God's counsel and providence, which former ages knew nothing of, in comparison of that clearness with which God was pleased to discover it to the apostles and prophets under the New Testament. That they are Christian, and not Jewish prophets, to whom St. Paul refers, is, I think, fully evident ; not only because they are placed after the apostles to whom they were inferior, but because the words, *now revealed*, expressly determine both the time and persons : not to add, that if the prophets under the Old Testament were intended, and if they knew as much of this mystery as the apostles under the New, there would be in this point little difference between the Old and New Testament dispensation ; nor would it be strictly true, that it was not known in other ages as fully as in the age of the apostles. St. Paul every where speaks of the revelation of this mystery, as the peculiar glory of the gospel ministry and dispensation.

men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power:

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this

to mankind in former ages, as God hath been now pleased to discover it by his Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ;

Even this secret purpose of God, that the uncircumcised Gentiles should be made fellow-heirs, and constituted one body with the Jews themselves, and partakers with them of his promise to Abraham, by Jesus Christ through the preaching of his gospel:

Of which gospel I was made a minister and dispenser, according to that singular and undeserved favour that was conferred upon me, when, by the influence of his power, I was miraculously converted; and when, by extraordinary revelation, the eternal purpose of God, in reference to your conversion and salvation, was fully made known to me;

To me, I say, who, because formerly a persecutor and blasphemer, am less than the least of all Christians

Ver. 6. *Fellow-heirs*, i. e. 'equally heirs with the Jews of all the privileges to be enjoyed under the age and government of the Messiah.'

And of the same body.] συσσωμα, 'concorporated, made one body, one spiritual society, people, kingdom, and church with the Jews.'

Partakers of his promise in Christ.] i. e. 'Of that promise which God made to Abraham, that in him, in his seed, which is Christ, all nations of the earth should be blessed; and blessed in like manner as Abraham was, viz. by being justified and accepted by faith, after his example.'

Ver. 7. The apostle unquestionably refers, in these words, to the extraordinary manner in which he was called to, and fitted for, the work and office of an apostle. *He was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God*, i. e. 'merely by his undeserved favour.' It was according to the influence and operation of his power; because St. Paul's conversion to the christian faith was purely miraculous, and his knowledge of the gospel, the effect of very extraordinary and immediate inspiration. And both these considerations were arguments of the truth of his doctrine, and reasons why those he preached to, should steadfastly adhere to it.

Ver. 8. *Less than the least of all saints.*] The original word is excellently well rendered by our translators. The apostle doth not content himself with saying, that he was the *least* of all saints, but his humility goes yet lower, and he styles himself *less* than the least of all saints. Such diminutive forms of expression are used by the best writers. The apostle refers to what he was before his conversion, "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious," as he frankly confesses, 1 Tim. i. 13.

The unsearchable riches of Christ.] i. e. 'The invaluable blessings of his gospel and kingdom.' But the peculiar beauty and propriety of these expressions, *I am made a minister,—less than the least of all saints,—Is this grace or favour given,—the unsearchable riches of Christ*: I say, the peculiar propriety of them will appear, if we compare them with what profane writers* deliver concerning the priests of Diana's temple.

Thus Strabo tells us†, 'that it was an office of very great dignity, and that those who obtained it were held in very high esteem.' They were called Νεωκοποι, 'The keepers of the temple;' a word applied to the whole city of Ephesus, because of their devotion to this goddess, Acts xix. 35. In opposition to these St. Paul styles himself Διакονος, "the minister of the gospel of Christ," and, to shew the dignity of it, declares it to be "the free gift of the grace of God, given him according to the working of his power;" and to express his own obligations for so high an honour conferred on him, he calls himself 'less than the least of all saints.' These priests of Diana had, farther, the custody of her treasures‡; in whose hands pledges of money were deposited, to be by them restored to those who had the proper claim to them. In opposition to these treasures, St. Paul speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," of which

* Xen. de Exp. Cyr.—Plaut. in Bac.—Spanh. de Num. p. 717, 718.

† L. 14. p. 950.

‡ Her temple was famous for riches. Πρωτον μὲν τῆς Εφεσίας, &c. Pausan. p. 533.

this grace given, that I should preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ;

9 And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God; who created all things by Jesus Christ :

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers

tians, was this great favour vouchsafed ; that I should preach amongst the uncircumcised Gentiles, those inestimable, and never enough to be admired blessings, which are the gift of God by Jesus Christ ;

And that I should spread this joyful light amongst all men without exception, and enable them to understand how glorious a privilege it is, actually to communicate in, and to be made the immediate partakers of, that grace, which was for ages past locked up as a mystery and secret in the undiscovered counsels of God, who originally created the worlds, visible and invisible, and formed the Gentiles to be his peculiar church and people; by the ministry of Jesus Christ :

That thus the angels of God themselves, those principalities and powers that dwell in heaven, might understand

he was to preach " the glad tidings to all nations ;" riches of infinitely more worth than all the treasures of Diana's temple. The mysteries of Diana were also very sacred, and it was accounted the highest honour to be initiated into them : to this St. Paul opposes the communion of that mystery which was hid in God, in which he was appointed to enlighten all nations by the gospel of Christ, and the knowledge of which was attended with the most valuable privileges and benefits. These references to Diana shew the full propriety of the apostle's expressions, as well as throw a great light on the subject of which he treats.

Ver. 9. *To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery.*] By " the fellowship of the mystery," the apostle means, an actual communion in, or participation of, that grace and favour, which it was the everlasting purpose of God to bestow on the Gentiles by the Messiah, though for many ages wholly concealed from their knowledge ; and to make them see what this fellowship was, means his shewing them the vast advantage and blessedness of sharing in it, and the wonderful method by which this great event was accomplished ; or, granting them a full discovery of this great mystery which was hid in God ; i. e. ' lay concealed in his breast, or in his undiscovered counsels and purposes.'

Who created all things by Jesus Christ.] Mr. Locke, and many other interpreters, understand by this expression, " the new creation only," or, the constituting or forming the christian church by the preaching of the gospel. This unquestionably is included : hence, as Christians, we are said to be " his workmanship in Christ Jesus, created unto good works," ii. 10. But then, as the expression here is general, " Created all things," I see no reason why we should confine it to the new creation only ; since it is certain that God created the heavens and the earth by Jesus Christ, as well as the christian church ; I may add, that the including the first creation in the expression, adds a dignity to the sentiment ; as it represents our blessed Saviour as the author of the first and second, the natural and the moral creation, under the direction and by the power of God his Father.

Ver. 10. *By the principalities and powers,*] which the apostle speaks of, Mr. Locke and others think is meant, the Jewish high-priests, scribes, and pharisees, who would not allow the uncircumcised Gentile converts to be subjects of the Messiah's kingdom : but I do not see, how the words " principalities and powers," especially as the apostle adds, *in heavenly places*, can, without great straining, be interpreted of them. Why should we not understand the words in their obvious sense, since they will convey a very excellent and noble meaning ? Whilst this calling of the Gentiles was a mystery concealed in God, the angels could understand no more of it than men ; and therefore their knowledge of God's dispensations must be as gradual as those dispensations themselves ; and, by consequence, the actual accomplishment of the divine purposes must afford new proofs of the wisdom of God, which is manifold, exerts itself in a variety of methods to bring to pass its own designs : and therefore the constitution of the gospel church, and the bringing the Gentiles into it, did add to the knowledge of the powers and principalities of heaven, and gave them a fresh view of the great wisdom of God, in bringing about this important event. So true is it literally, that " to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, was made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

12 *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

understand and acknowledge the manifold proofs of the Divine wisdom in the gathering and forming his church on earth;

According to that exact disposition and settlement of the ages of the world, and that eternal purpose which he formed, and determined should take place under Jesus Christ our Lord:

In and through whom we Gentiles have a free and open admission, with the fullest assurance of mind of our acceptance, to all the privileges and immunities of his church, as the consequence of our believing in him, and submission to his gospel.

Thus you see, fellow Christians, the honour and happiness of your christian character and profession. It is your glory, that you have the secret mysteries, the hidden counsels of God, revealed in their full lustre and brightness; that you are made heirs of all the ancient promises of God, and of celestial and eternal blessings, and are constituted that one body, which he animates and governs by his Son and Spirit; that to you are open and tendered all the unsearchable riches of Christ, the invaluable treasures of his everlasting gospel; that to you are made known the manifold instances of God's wisdom, in so directing and disposing the several ages of the world, as should most effectually contribute to execute the purposes of the divine goodness, and to spread the light of pure and undefiled religion; and finally, that you have the freest access to him as your reconciled God and Father, and the most solid assurance of his acceptance to immortal life, and incorruptible glory, as the reward of your faith in, and submission to, his Son. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and putting on the new man,

Ver. 11. *According to his eternal purpose.*] The word *προθεσις* properly signifies the disposition which a person makes of any thing, either in his intention or conduct: and in the place before us, both seem to be included. The literal translation of the Greek words is not, as in our version, *according to his eternal purpose*, the word *his* not being in the original; but, "according to the disposition of ages, which he made in or by Christ." Our Saviour tells his disciples just before his ascension, Acts i. 7. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath placed under his own power:" the disposition of these he hath reserved to himself. In the second chapter and seventh verse of this epistle, we read of "the ages to come:" in the ninth verse of this chapter, we read of "the mystery hidden from ages," i. e. from ages past: in Heb. i. 2. the apostle tells us, "that God appointed Christ the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:" or, as I think the words should be translated, "for whose sake," or, "upon whose account," he made even the ages; which illustrates and confirms the former proposition, "that he appointed him heir of all things," and is a just comment upon the passage before us: for the apostle affirms, "that the angels of heaven understood the manifold wisdom of God, by the gathering the christian church, in that disposition of the ages, which he formed or settled by Jesus Christ; all which had a reference to him, and led on to the accomplishment of the divine purposes of mercy and favour towards mankind, in and by him."

Ver. 12. *In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence.*] i. e. "through whom we have an open and free access to God, in the privileges of his church and people; with full assurance of our acceptance, with him through faith:—A free access, as children to a father, and to all the privileges of the filial state; a free access, as his people, to all the benefits of his church; and with as good reason for assurance as ever the Jews had to boast, that they were the chosen and peculiar inheritance of God."

which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; putting on the whole armour of God, that you may overcome the most dangerous enemies of your salvation, and finally obtain the invaluable reward of everlasting life and glory.

The apostle having fully explained to the Ephesians the secret purpose of God, in reference to the calling and conversion of the Gentiles to the knowledge and belief of the gospel; concludes this part of his letter to them with his most solemn prayers to Almighty God in their behalf; that they might be steadfast in their christian profession, and increase in all useful and valuable knowledge.

T E X T.

13 *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

14 *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

15 *Of whom the whole family*

P A R A P H R A S E.

Since therefore you are made partakers of these invaluable privileges, by the gospel which I have preached to you, I beseech you that ye be not terrified and disheartened in your profession, upon account of those afflictions, which I suffer on your behalf; since these afflictions are so far from being any reproach to you, that you ought rather to glory on the account of them; when you consider the firmness of mind with which I endure them, and the attestation I hereby give to the truth of the doctrines I have preached to you.

For this cause I prostrate myself before him, who is the Author of all good, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Who is the common Father of the angels of heaven,

Ver. 13. *For this cause I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you.*] Though the apostle had conversed near three years with them, and been the instrument of their conversion, and gained by his conversation and preaching amongst them a good share in their esteem; yet when they saw him subject to such continual persecutions, it might occasion in them some suspicion of the goodness of his cause, and the truth of his doctrine; especially as they saw even the Judaizing Christians were amongst the number of his enemies, who either occasioned or rejoiced in his sufferings. Therefore he entreats them not to faint at his tribulations for them*. And for this he urges two reasons.

Faint not at my tribulations for you.] His sufferings were upon their account, because of the gospel he had preached to them; and therefore ought to have been considered by them as an argument of the apostle's affection and zeal for them.

Which is your glory.] The construction of this expression renders the sense of it somewhat ambiguous. The pronoun *which* may either be referred to the whole sentence, and then the meaning will be: 'That your not being disheartened at my afflictions will be your glory and commendation:' or else the pronoun may be referred only to the apostle's sufferings, and the sense will be, 'Be not disheartened at my afflictions on your account, for these my afflictions are your glory, as I am hereby enabled to give you an example of fortitude, and an abundant proof, that I know the truth of the doctrine I have preached to you.' Both senses are so good, that I know not which of them to prefer.

Ver. 14. *I bend my knees to the Father.*] "Bending the knee," is praying to God the Father; for this was the common posture of supplicants to God: thus "our Saviour bent his knees to his heavenly Father," Luke xxii. 41. See also Acts ix. 4.

Ver. 15. *Of whom the whole family is named.*] This seems to me plainly to allude, and to be urged

* The original word signifies "to behave like a coward, and through fear to desert the post of battle." See Hom. II. Ω. v. 214. 216.

mily in heaven and earth is named;

16 *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inward man:*

17 *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith:*

18 *That*

ven, and of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, on earth, who under him constitute one family:

To him I bend my knees in your behalf, that, according to his abundant power and grace, he would grant you those gifts of his Holy Spirit, which may strengthen and confirm your minds in your christian profession:

That thus Christ himself may dwell in your hearts, as in a temple consecrated to his service, by your sincere belief of the principles of his religion, and steady adherence to the faith of his gospel.

And

in opposition to Diana of Ephesus, who was the common goddess of the Asiatic cities; in whose worship they were united, and by whose common contributions her temple was built; which was the common temple of those incorporated cities: so that all Asia (as we have it, Acts xix. 27.) “worshipped her:” which was therefore strictly and properly her family, over which she presided as the common mother and patroness: and there are medals and ancient inscriptions remaining to this day, that abundantly prove it*. Now the apostle tells these Ephesians, “that, as Christians, they belonged to a nobler family, which took its denomination from, and was immediately subject to, God, as its common Father;” “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” The words *of whom* may be referred to the immediate antecedent, Jesus Christ, and then the sense will be, “that the angels of heaven, and all Christians on earth, are constituted one family in and by Jesus Christ. But, as those words in the former verse, *our Lord Jesus Christ*, are wanting in several manuscripts, and are omitted by some of the most ancient versions, it is most natural to refer the words, *of whom*, to that God the Father, to whom the apostle bent his knees. For as he is properly the God and Father of Angels and men, the family of both must be his; denominated from, and immediately subject to, him. This is one reason of the name *Father*, which is emphatically given to him: hence also he is called by our blessed Saviour, *οικοδεσπότης*, the Lord or Master of the house or family: and hence, as Christians, we are said to be “the children of God” by faith.” Next follows the matter of his prayer.

Ver. 16. *That he would grant you to be strengthened with might.*] The original word rendered *strengthened*, properly relates to the body; but is transferred to the mind in a figurative sense: thus it is said of our Saviour, that *the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit*, i. e. as it is immediately explained, *he was filled with wisdom*, Luke ii. 40. St. Paul uses it, “not of strength of understanding and judgment, but of strength of resolution and constancy,” *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong*, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. i. e. “Let your courage and steadfastness never fail you.” And this seems to be the intention of the apostle’s prayer in the place before us, that they might *be strengthened with might*, i. e. “mightily strengthened,” or “that God would give them that firmness of resolution, that mighty courage in their profession of Christianity, which should support them under his, or their own sufferings upon account of it.”

By his Spirit.] It is evident, that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which the first converts to Christianity received, were the great means of their establishment and confirmation in their christian profession. But by the “Spirit” here, may also be understood those more ordinary influences of the power and grace of God, which is the frequent meaning of the word *Spirit*, and *Spirit of God*, in the sacred writings.

In the inward man.] i. e. “the mind and spirit,” of which the body is only the outward cloathing and habitation. A soul strengthened with principles of important knowledge, and confirmed in the resolutions and habits of religion and virtue, is an attainment, to which every Christian should aspire, and is that great blessing which he should seriously and fervently ask of God.

According to the riches of his glory.] i. e. “His abundant and glorious power.” Thus the apostle expresses himself, Col. i. 11. “That ye may be strengthened with all power according to the strength of his glory;” or, “his glorious and almighty power.” So that the whole of this petition is this: That God would grant to the Ephesians those gifts of his Holy Spirit, and so influence their minds by the impressions of his glorious power, as should strengthen and confirm their hearts in their christian faith and profession. And this he farther explains in the following verse:

Ver. 17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*] The apostle here compares the minds of the

* See Spanheim. Vol. I. p. 575.

18 *That ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and* And being established together, and built upon one common foundation of divine love, ye may be able to form a proper conception of the glory and grandeur of this his spiritual temple; which, as it consists

of the Ephesian converts to a temple; and as the temple at Ephesus was supposed to be inhabited by Diana, and had that image of her, which was fabulously reported to have fallen from heaven, constantly dwelling in it; the apostle prays for a much nobler and more substantial blessing for his Ephesian converts, viz. "That Christ might dwell in them, not personally, but by faith," i. e. 'by the principles of his religion, heartily and firmly believed by them; and that these principles possessing their minds, might arm them with courage and resolution under all the sufferings to which their profession might expose them.' It was the custom of the Ephesians to carry about with them little temples of Diana, made after the form of her temple at Ephesus, in token of their veneration of, and attachment to, this Goddess, and as a kind of preservative against misfortunes and evils. Such were the shrines made by Demetrius, Acts xix. 24.: and these little temples are expressly mentioned by Xenophon, in his account of the Expedition of Cyrus, l. 5. p. 274. In opposition to this superstition, the apostle prays, 'that Christ might dwell even in the hearts of his Ephesians, by the solid principles of his religion, whereby they would become consecrated to his service, and effectually preserved from every thing that might draw them to apostasy, and endanger their salvation.'

Ver. 18. This verse is, I think, in every word almost, an allusion to Diana's temple at Ephesus; and though a very remarkable and beautiful allusion, yet is not taken notice of by any interpreter or critic that I have seen. Pliny tells us, in his Natural History*, that "this temple of Diana at Ephesus was worthy of admiration, upon account of its magnificence, being two hundred and fifty years † in building, at the expence of all Asia; that it was erected in a fenny or marshy ground, that, by the continual wetness of the soil, it might be effectually secure against earthquakes; and that, in order to prevent the foundation of so fast a fabric giving way in so infirm a situation, they trod a kind of coals into the ground, and covered them over with fleeces of wool; that being thus bound together, the ground might be strong and durable." In opposition to this wonderful foundation, the apostle speaks of the Ephesians, 'now become the temple of God through Christ,' as "rooted and founded in love;" they were built into an holy temple, upon the foundation of the eternal love of God, and the unsearchable love of Christ; a foundation infinitely stronger than that which supported Diana's temple, being as immovable as the being and perfections of God himself. And how glorious was the structure erected on this unchangeable foundation of Divine love!—that they might apprehend this, the apostle prays;

That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth.] Interpreters universally refer this to the love of Christ; but I think very injudiciously: for it is evident, that breadth, and length, and height, and depth, are the properties of a building; and I think there can be but little question, that the apostle refers to the grandeur of Diana's temple, which was one of the wonders of the world. Pliny, in the place before-mentioned, tells us; 'That its length was four hundred and twenty-five feet, its breadth two hundred and twenty, that it was supported by one hundred and seven pillars, each of them sixty feet high.' But how wonderful soever the dimensions of this structure were, they were nothing in comparison of that spiritual temple, which was founded and erected by God. Its breadth and length extended as wide as the universe, comprehending believers of all nations; and its depth and height was from earth to heaven, since angels as well as men are comprehended in it, and built into one holy temple, upon the foundations of the love of God and Christ; for of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named. When therefore the apostle prays for them, that they might comprehend what was the breadth, &c. he means; 'That they might understand and acknowledge the wisdom and power of God in the constitution of the christian church, which comprehended all nations upon earth, and was made one family, one temple and church, with all the angels of heaven:' and when he adds, "that they might be able to comprehend it with all saints," it is in plain allusion to what we read of, Acts xix. 27. that the temple of Diana was held in veneration, and she herself worshipped all over the world: but the wisdom and power of God, in the constitution of the christian church, was infinitely more worthy veneration, and would ever be magnified and adored by all saints, even to the end of the world.

* L. xxxvi. c. 14.

† L. xvi. c. 40.

and length, and depth, and height;

19 *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.*

20 *Now to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly*

consists of all saints, extends itself in breadth and length over all the nations of the world, is high as the heavens, and deep as the earth;

And that hereby ye may know somewhat of the greatness of that love of Christ, which indeed can never be fully understood, to which this heavenly temple owes its rise; that thus ye may be filled with all the fulness of God; that he may inhabit you by the gifts of his Spirit, the knowledge of his truth, and the exercise of mutual and unfeigned love.

Now unto that God, who is able to do for us more than we have yet experienced, and abundantly more

Ver. 19. *And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.*] This seems also to refer to the wonderful art with which Diana's temple was built. It was, as Pliny calls it*, an admirable building: the contrivance he calls, *summa miracula*, 'the highest miracles †.' But how much more wonderful was the love of Christ, in gathering a church from amidst the idolatrous Gentiles! How truly above our utmost thoughts and apprehensions! Especially considering the happy consequences of this knowledge;

That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.] In these words also is a reference to Diana's image, which, as St. Jerom tells us, 'was carved full of breasts, to denote that she was the mother and nurse of all the living.' But how infinitely glorious is that fulness and perfection which dwells in God, in which all sincere Christians partake, since he dwells in them as his own temple, by the principles of religion, the habits of virtue, the peace and satisfactions of a good conscience, and the well-grounded and chearful hopes of everlasting life and glory; and since they may derive from him all those gracious supports, which are necessary to life and godliness! And after the apostle had thus finished the argument of their election, and prayed for their increasing knowledge and establishment in the christian faith, he concludes with a solemn thanksgiving to God by Jesus Christ:

Ver. 20. This verse is a plain but noble description of God the Father. "He is able to do for us all, or every thing we ask of him;" or can reasonably think necessary for our benefit and advantage. "He is able to do more for us than we can ask or think;" since neither his goodness or power can be limited by our petitions, or poor conceptions; "yea, he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly more, than we can ask or think," since his power and goodness are absolutely infinite, and are as afar above our thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth. He is supreme in all perfection; hath all happiness in himself; and is the inexhaustible fountain from whence all good proceeds. Such a consideration as this was extremely proper to the circumstances of the Ephesians, who were exposed to sufferings for their christian profession on the one hand, and to whom the Judaizing Christians denied the possibility of salvation, on the other, unless they were circumcised, and became subject to the law of Moses: In each case the infinite power and goodness of God was a sure relief to them, since he was able to establish and support them under their persecutions; and not only to constitute them the members of his church, but to grant them even those eternal blessings, which were beyond the utmost conceptions of their hearts, and which therefore could not be the subjects, which they directly and expressly made mention of in their addresses to God: And in order the better to assure them of this, he puts them in mind of the power of God they had already experienced:

According to the power that worketh in us.] This he describes in the strongest expressions, chap. i. ver. 19, 20. He there calls it the "exceeding greatness of his power," and "the energy of the power of his strength, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." This power was exerted in their being quickened when dead in trespasses and sins, and recovered from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and in building them up to himself a church and people, that they might be to the praise of his glorious grace: now the same power which they had already experienced in producing this wonderful change, a change which they neither asked nor thought of, was abundantly sufficient to confer on them as real and valuable blessings for the future, suitable to all their wants, far exceeding all their thoughts, and even greater than they themselves could ever directly ask for.

* L. vii. c. 37.

† L. xxxvi. c. 14.

*dantly above all that we ask
or think, according to the
power that worketh in us :*

more than we ask of him, or can form any conception of, by the influence of that power which hath already shewn itself in our conversion to, and establishment in, the faith of Christ :

*21 Unto him be glory in
the church by Jesus Christ
throughout all ages, world
without end. Amen.*

To him be ascribed glory in the church through Jesus Christ the only Mediator, to all generations, world without end. Amen.

From this CHAPTER we may observe,

I. That the extraordinary call of the apostle, and those distinguishing revelations that were made him of the mysteries and secret purposes of God's will, are a just argument for our embracing his doctrines, and conforming our lives to the great design of his writings : He was in a peculiar manner the apostle of the Gentiles, whom God raised up, and abundantly fitted for preaching amongst them the unfearchable riches of Christ. To his ministry we owe that gospel in which we believe, and which therefore we should constantly make the great rule of our worship and behaviour.

II. From the apostle's prayer for these Ephesians we learn, ' that we are to bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Fountain, and original Author of all Good : ' That prayer to him, is but a reasonable acknowledgment of his supreme perfection, and our absolute dependance on him for the blessings that we want ; that our proper strength as Christians, to support us under all the difficulties and temptations of the present state, is to be derived from him ; and

Ver. 21. *Unto him be glory in the church.*] " Unto him," i. e. ' unto God the Father be glory in the church.' Let all the members of the christian church glorify him, and offer their praises to him as the ultimate object of their addresses ; as that infinitely powerful and gracious Being, from whom all their supplies must come, and who alone, as the supreme fountain of good, can answer, and exceed their desires and prayers.

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.] The great object of our adoration, and the medium by which it should be offered, are here expressly and distinctly represented. The object is he " who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think," even the almighty Father ; the person, by and through whom, or in whose name, this glory and praise is to be offered to the Father, is Jesus Christ : For " there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus." Nor doth our Lord himself differ from St. Paul : he saith to his disciples, " Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father, in my name, he will give it you," John xvi. 23. : so that all prayer and praise are ultimately to be addressed to the Father in the name of Christ, as the appointed Saviour of mankind, and as that one Mediator by whom the Father communicates his will, and the effects of his favour to sincere Christians. This is the primitive method appointed by our Saviour and his apostles, of praying to and praising God ; and therefore, I suppose, must be an orthodox and safe way of christian devotion ; especially as St. Paul recommends this method for perpetual observation :

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.] The expression in the Greek is so emphatical, that it can scarce be rendered into English. " To all the generations of the age of ages," i. e. ' throughout all the successions of all possible ages, glory must be ascribed unto the Father by Christ.' I confess, that the practice of the Christian church for many ages, hath superseded this command : though I do not find any injunction and precedent in the New Testament for the doing it : the apostolic example may, and ought to be followed, though I do not censure or condemn other forms, made use of by serious and inquisitive Christians ; for every man ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and direct the worship he pays to God accordingly.

that the consideration of his almighty and infinite power, by which he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, is the noblest motive to, and encouragement of, our prayers.

III. That all true Christians are the temples and habitations of God through Christ; inasmuch as Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, by the principles of Christianity believed; by those graces, or good dispositions, of resolution, patience, and perseverance, which are the effect of their belief, by the exercise of fervent charity and love, and by grateful praises and thanksgivings offered to the Father, for his numerous and invaluable benefits conferred upon them. These are the most solid proofs that Christians can have of Christ's dwelling in them: for what are temples but places consecrated to God, and appropriated to those solemn prayers and praises, which proceed from humble and grateful worshippers? Such temples God will honour with his presence, and enrich with the invaluable treasures of his favour. And to him therefore, who is thus able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The apostle having, in the foregoing part of this epistle, finished the argument of God's purpose and manner of calling the Gentiles into his church; proceeds to give them those practical directions, which were agreeable to the nature of Christianity, and the observance of which was necessary, in order to their acting suitable to the privileges, with which they had been favoured.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

C H A P. IV.

1 *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

2 *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love:*

3 *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

4 *There*

Since therefore you are thus called to the knowledge of the gospel, and the privileges of the church of God, I Paul, who am in bonds for the cause of Christ, beseech you, that you would behave yourselves in all things suitable to that grace which hath been shewn you, and to the obligations of your Christian profession.

Particularly, that you become exemplary for your humility and meekness, be mild and gentle to each other, notwithstanding your mutual differences, bearing with each other from a principle of sincere and fervent affection.

Thus endeavouring to keep your hearts firmly united to one another, by the bond of a lasting and indissoluble peace.

For

Ver. 1. *That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*] i. e. 'in a manner agreeable to the nature, and suitable to the design of it.' The vocation of which the apostle speaks was the profession and privileges of Christianity to which God had called them by the preaching of the gospel; and that behaviour which was suitable to it, the apostle describes to the end of the epistle.

Ver. 3. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*] The cities of the lesser Asia

4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.*

5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*

6 *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

7 *But*

For both Jews and Gentiles are constituted one body and church in Christ; they have received the same Spirit, to witness that they are equally the children of God, and called as Christians to the same blessed hope of eternal life and glory.

It is one and the same Lord Jesus Christ that is your Head and Saviour; it is one and the same faith which as Christians you have all been taught; one and the same baptism, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that ye have all received.

It is one and the same God in whom you have believed, even him who is the Father of angels and men, and especially of those who believe in Christ, without

were united in one religion, and in the worship of one goddess, and on this account maintained a constant peace and friendship amongst each other *. St. Paul recommends to his Ephesians an inviolable union and friendship, upon a more firm and noble foundation: they ought not, as members of the Christian church, to be less united, than when addicted to one common impiety and superstition. It is probable, that the Judaizing Christians had been endeavouring to unsettle them, and to disaffect them to the doctrine St. Paul had taught them, and had been too successful in their attempts to divide them.

Ver. 4. *There is one body.*] There are antient medals now extant, which have the figure of Diana on them, with this inscription *κοινον της Ασιας*, denoting that the cities of Asia were one body or commonwealth. Thus also were all Christians, of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, under Christ.

One Spirit, which animates and enlivens this body, by his extraordinary and wonderful gifts. "For all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will; and by this one Spirit we have been all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles," 1 Cor. xii. 11, 13.

Ibid. *Called in one hope.*] *εν ελπιδι*, to one common hope, i. e. 'to the hope of the same blessedness and salvation.' Thus the preposition is rendered by our translators, Luke i. 17. "Call the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." And thus it is used by the best Greek authors.

Ver. 5. *One Lord.*] The term 'Lord' is in a peculiar manner applied to our blessed Saviour, 1 Cor. viii. 6. "there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things," it should have been rendered, 'thru' whom are all things,' the Father having created all things by him, and we through him; viz. 'constituted the members of God's church, and the heirs of salvation.' The term 'Lord' signifies his authority over the church, which is wholly subject to his direction and influence.

One faith.] One and the same gospel, containing one settled and fixed scheme of truth, that was preached by him and his apostles, which is embraced by Jews and Gentiles, that are become his genuine disciples.

One baptism.] All Christians being entered into the church by water, and equally baptised, with the same form of expression, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Ver. 6. *One God and Father of all.*] It should be rendered, *Even the Father of all*, the universal creator, and the Father in an especial manner of the whole reasonable creation, and particularly of every faithful Christian.

Who is above all.] Superior in perfection, dignity, and authority; even above him who is the one Lord of Christians, being his Father and his God, by whom he formed the first and last creation, i. e. 'made the worlds and constituted and gathered his church.

Through all.] Universally present, upholding all things by his power, directing all things by his wisdom, over-ruling and disposing all events by his providence, and particularly managing all the affairs of his church, by his supreme authority.

And in you all.] Or, as the words may be rendered, *amongst you all*; manifesting his goodness to you by the privileges to which he hath called you, and the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit which he hath conferred on you. And this I take to be the proper meaning of this expression, 'who is in you all,' viz. that the various gifts, which are conferred on the members of the church, whether Jews or Gentiles, are an abundant proof that God is truly present with you, accepting you as his church and people; and thus the following words will have a just and natural connection herewith.

* See *Ælian*. 14. 37.

without any difference or exception of persons; who is over all, supreme in majesty, perfection, and dominion; who is through all, filling all things with his presence, and over-ruling them by his providence; and who is in you all, by the principles of truth, the habits of virtue, and the extraordinary gifts of his Holy Spirit.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

It is true that these gifts conferred upon all Christians, are not exactly the same, nor the offices they bear in the church alike. These favours are in nature, measure, and proportion, according as Christ the bestower of them is pleased to direct.

8 Wherefore he saith, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Agreeable to this purpose may be applied those words of David, ascribing his victories to God. "Thou hast ascended on high, as thou hast caused me to conquer the high hills of Bashan. Thou hast led captivity captive, as thou hast enabled me to take captive my enemies that led thy people into captivity. Thou hast received gifts for men, as thou hast made my enemies tributary, and caused them

9 Now

to

Ver. 7. *Unto every one of us is given grace.*] It should unquestionably be rendered, 'unto every one of us is given the gracious gift,' the word *χαρις* being frequently used of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and referring in this place to those extraordinary offices, which God appointed in the primitive church, as is plain from the eleventh verse.

This gift is vouchsafed according to the measure of the gift of Christ.] i. e. 'In such measure and proportion as Christ thinks proper to distribute them.' *Εξω τε μετρος* signifies in the best Greek writers, 'out of proportion,' or 'immoderate,' *Ælian*. l. i. c. 19. and therefore the expression in the place before us, *κατα το μετρον* signifies, 'according to the wise measure and fit proportion of the distribution of Christ;' who knew what offices were most proper to be appointed in his church, and who were the fittest persons to sustain them.

Ver. 8. *Wherefore he says, Διο λεγεις.*] "According," or "agreeable to which purpose David, or the scripture says." The passage is cited, not, as I apprehend, by way of strict proof, but by way of accommodation, and to illustrate the point by a like instance.

When he ascended up on high, &c. It is a passage from *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* which runs thus: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men." They are unquestionably the words of David, praising God for the successes he had vouchsafed his people over their enemies, and for that plenty and prosperity he had granted them; and the sense of the words, in their literal acceptation, I take to be this: "Thou hast ascended on high," 'thou hast shewn thy majesty and power by thy victories and triumphs over the enemies of thy people, and hast thereby declared thyself to be higher than the kings and princes of the earth.' "Thou hast led captivity captive:" i. e. 'thou hast wholly overcome thine enemies, and brought them into a real captivity to thy people: "thou hast received gifts for men," viz. 'from the nations thou hast conquered and rendered tributary, that thou mightest, as a victorious prince, give largesses to thy people, and enrich them with their enemies spoils.' I suppose this whole passage alludes to the custom of victorious princes causing their captives to pass before them, and distributing largesses to their people.

The apostle, in citing this passage of the Psalmist, a little alters the expression; for, instead of repeating David's words, "Thou hast received gifts," he says, "He gave gifts to men." Thus also doth the Chaldee paraphrase, and the Syriac and Arabic versions. And this is the natural and genuine sense of the place; for God could no otherwise receive gifts, than as he caused them to be given to his people; which is abundantly sufficient to vindicate the justness and truth of the apostle's citation. The application the apostle makes of it, viz. to the ascension and victory of Christ, and the gifts he distributed in consequence of it, immediately follows:

9 *Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?*

10 *He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.*

11 *And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;*

12 *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,*

to bring their acknowledgments and presents to me."

Now when we say of Christ, that he is ascended, what less can be included in it than this, that he first descended into our world, and even into the grave itself?

Yes; he who thus descended, he is the person who is ascended to the right hand of God, far above the highest heavens, that thus, like a conquering and triumphing Prince, he might fill both Jews and Gentiles who believe in him, with all spiritual and divine blessings.

And accordingly he raised up and fitted some persons in the church to be his apostles and witnesses to the world; others to be prophets, whom he fully instructed in that great mystery of calling the uncircumcised Gentiles; some to be evangelists, to be the companions and assistants of his apostles; and others to be pastors and teachers, to be the stated instructors and overseers of the church.

All this variety of gifts and offices hath one and the same view, viz. the perfecting and rendering all Christians

Ver. 9. *Now that he ascended.*] In the Greek *το δε, Now this* [expression] "he ascended," *τις* *εστιν*; "what is it?" "What doth it infer and necessarily include?" "but that he descended first?"—The Psalmist unquestionably meant it of God, whom he represents as descending from heaven to conquer his enemies, and as afterwards ascending in triumph over them.—In like manner, this expression, when applied to Christ, that He *ascended*, doth it not naturally import, that he first descended into the lower parts of the earth? I do not apprehend, that "these lower parts of the earth" mean any thing more than this world or earth, as inferior to the heaven. Vallies are said to be lower parts in comparison of hills, and the highest mountains; the whole globe of the earth, are lower parts in comparison of the heavens above us, which is the very comparison that the apostle makes: and into this lower earth Christ descended when he became man. The apostle adds in the next verse:

Ver. 10. *He that descended, even he it is, the self-same person, who ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things,*] i. e. "Jews and Gentiles, with all divine and spiritual blessings." So that this allusion seems to stand thus: God is represented, by the Psalmist, as descending to conquer his enemies: thus Christ descended to deliver mankind out of the hands of their enemies, by delivering them from sin, and rising from the dead to assure them of their resurrection. After this conquest God is farther represented as ascending triumphantly to his throne and glory: Thus Christ having obtained full victory over death and the grave ascended in triumph to the highest heavens. And as God received the gifts of the conquered tributary nations to bestow them on his people; so Christ received from his Father "the fullness of all grace, that he might fill all things:" i. e. "bestow them in such proportions as he pleased on all that should believe in him." Thus the connection will be just, and the allusion beautiful. What Christ's "filling all things" implies, the apostle explains in the verse immediately following:

Ver. 12. *For the perfecting of the saints.*] *καταρτιζω* signifies an "exact composition of one thing out of many," and hence figuratively it is used to denote such persons as reconcile those who have been at variance. So that "the perfection of the saints" spoken of here, seems to intend the full settlement of the Church, by introducing both Jews and Gentiles into it, and uniting them together in affection and love, as the members of the same body. This was one end unquestionably of the various offices Christ appointed; and what appears to be the great intention of the apostle, in this part of the epistle, is, to preserve and establish a settled peace and union amongst all the

ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ:

Christians more firmly united, and compacted thro' the service of the ministry, and that edification of the whole body and church of Christ, which is the great end of its institution and appointment.

13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure*

That thus we may every one attain, by embracing the same faith, and being instructed in the knowledge of the Son of God, to the age and stature of perfect men, even as Christ himself encreased in wisdom

the members of the Ephesian church, whether Jews or Gentiles. Now this coalescence and union of the saints was to be effected

Through or by the work of the ministry.] The word *διακονία* signifies any service or ministry in general. Luke x. 40. Sometimes peculiarly "the apostleship." Acts i. 17. 25. Sometimes "the service of an Evangelist." 2 Tim. iv. 5. 11. Sometimes it is used to denote the particular office of preaching, and is called "the ministry of the word." Acts vi. 4. and finally, it denotes all those extraordinary offices which Christ raised and appointed. 1 Cor. xii. 5. "There are differences of ministrations, but the same Lord." And in this general sense it seems to be used in the place before us: since apostles and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers were all raised up for their several ministries, and the particular work allotted to each, to compact and unite, by their services, the saints of God, and thus to build up, i. e. 'to finish and complete the body and church of Christ.' Thus the apostle explains it:

Ver. 13. *Till we come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man.*] The apostle having mentioned the body of Christ in the foregoing verse, carries on the metaphor; telling the Ephesians, 'that the ministry, in all its various parts, was appointed by Christ to promote the union and growth of the body of Christ, till Christians, who composed it, should attain to the full age and maturity of manhood;' for this is the meaning of the expression, 'till we attain to a perfect man; till we attain to the state and age of full growth and manhood*.' Now this state of maturity and manhood, as it respected the Christian church, was and could only be attained, by, or through, a unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God: i. e. 'by a full discovery of, and settlement in, the great doctrines and truths of his gospel. Whilst the religion of Christ was imperfectly revealed or understood, Christianity and the church, and all particular Christians, were properly in a state of infancy. But when the full scheme of the gospel was opened, and Christians were brought to understand and embrace it, the church in general, and every such Christian in particular, were properly arrived at the full age of manhood. In like manner as the body is one, though consisting of several members, so the Christian church is cemented into one body by the knowledge and belief of Christianity.' And therefore I should choose to render the words thus: till we come or attain, through, or, by means of, that unity which is produced by the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood. The firm union of the members of the body, and the ripeness of understanding and judgment, are the two great signs and blessings of manhood. And in like manner the firm union of Jews and Gentiles in the knowledge, faith, and profession of Christ, and their attaining to the full understanding of the doctrines of Christianity, was the season of the churches full age and maturity. And this simile the apostle illustrates, by adding:

Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.] The word *πληρία*, which we render *stature*, signifies both age and stature, and may denote either or both in the place before us. "Unto the measure of the stature;" or, as the words may be rendered, "according, or in proportion to the stature and age of Christ."

The stature or age of the fulness of Christ.] i. e. 'in proportion to the full stature or perfect age of Christ.' The apostle seems plainly to refer to the growth of Christ's body, and his gradual increase in wisdom; concerning which St. Luke tells us; "That the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom," Luke ii. 40. "Now he gave apostles and prophets, and other extraordinary officers, that the church might grow compacted in its members, till it should attain to its full maturity in strength and wisdom, according to the stature and age of Christ's own fulness:" i. e. 'as he grew in years and stature, till he attained the fulness or perfection of manhood.'

* See *Ælian*. l. 12. 1.

measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual

dom and stature, till he attained the full age and stature of a man;

And that we act no more like children, who are easily deceived and drawn aside by tricks and trifles; being no longer, like waves of the sea, which move in obedience to every wind, fluctuating in our faith, and varying in our principles, just as any plausible doctrine may be proposed to us by men, who, like false gamesters at dice, would cheat us, or who by subtlety and sleight of hand would deceive us:

But embracing the truth, and abounding in the exercise of fervent love, let us grow up in all things as the living members of Christ, who is the proper head of all Christians:

From whom the whole body of the church, Jews and Gentiles, being thus by faith and affection fitted to unite with each other, and firmly to coalesce, notwithstanding the various gifts and offices that are

Ver. 14. In this verse the apostle heaps together a croud of strong and lively figures. He represents such of the Christian church, as were wavering and unsettled in their principles, as children, who are continually changing their minds, just as any one turns them that they converse with. This inconstancy and uncertainty of opinion, he beautifully compares to the waves of the sea, which fluctuate and toss and roll every way, just as they are moved and driven by the wind; plausible opinions having the same effect upon unstable minds, as the winds have when they beat on the sea. And as those who endeavoured to unsettle them in their principles were evil and cunning deceivers, that had no principles of truth to act upon, he expresses it *, *by the sleight of men*, εν τη κυβερεια; the word signifies, if I may be allowed to make a word, “the dicing of men,” i. e. ‘by the deceitfulness of men, who have no more honour than common gamesters at dice;’ or, what I rather think to be implied, ‘by the rash opinions of false teachers, which have no more certainty and constancy in them than the dice,’ which vary at every throw. He adds;

And by cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.] Πανουργος properly signifies ‘a dextrous, crafty-fellow that can do every thing, and any thing by tricks and sleight of hand.’ It is used to denote the craftiness and subtlety of a fox, *Æl. l. 1. c. 5.* It denotes here the subtlety and false arts which those who endeavoured to corrupt them made use of, προς την μεθοδεϊαν της πλάνης, for the management or accomplishment of their deceit; or rather, for the more subtle disposition and orderance of error, which is the literal and therefore proper translation of the original words. In opposition to this the apostle advises,

Ver. 15. *Speaking the truth in love.*] Αληθευοντες doth not seem properly to denote so much “speaking the truth, as embracing and adhering to it;” and to render the Christian perfect, he must add to this regard to truth, love, or universal affection and benevolence. It was a noble saying of Pythagoras, agreeable to this sentiment of our apostle, ‘These are the two loveliest gifts of the Gods to men, τότε αληθευειν, και το ευεργετειν: to embrace the truth, and be beneficent;’ adding, ‘that each of these may be compared with the actions of the Gods,’ *Ælian. l. 12. c. 58.*

May grow up into him in all things.] i. e. ‘may encrease in all christian virtues and dispositions unto him, in and through him, under the influence of his religion, who is the head.’

Ver. 16. *From or by whom the whole body is fitly joined together.*] The apostle here continues the comparison of an human body. The whole body, that consists of diverse parts, συναρμολογημενον, is in all these parts proportioned and fitted for the nearest conjunction, και συμμιξαζομενον, and to connect and fasten with each other by every joint, contributing to this purpose; so that the body receives its encrease by the operation, i. e. the growth, of every single member, till, by that sympathy or kind of affection which there is between them, it grows up to its full strength and perfection. And thus the various offices and gifts of the christian church do unite, as the joints of the body do the several parts of it, the several members of the church; and will all conspire to promote its welfare, honour, and prosperity, if those members are united to one another in love.

effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

are conferred on the several members of it, gathers its full strength and maturity; each member contributing to the encrease and welfare of the whole; even as the natural body is compacted by what every joint furnishes to this end, and every single part operates in its measure and degree to the encrease of the whole, and by a kind of sympathy and affection contributes to its preservation and safety.

R E M A R K S.

Let me add by way of application, what though short contains the whole of Christianity, "that you would maintain the truth of love." Let it be the motto engraven on every heart, and the principle of your intire conduct to the end of life. For he who embraces real truth, who is benevolent in temper, and charitable in his behaviour, bears the noblest resemblance to God himself, who is the God of truth and love, and cannot fail of the reward and inheritance of a Christian.

The apostle having, in the beginning of this chapter, given the Ephesians a general exhortation to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and to cultivate, in an especial manner, union and friendship amongst themselves, from the consideration of their being all members of the one body or church of Christ; proceeds, in this second part of the chapter, to caution them against the corruptions and vices that were frequent amongst the idolatrous Gentiles, and to press them to the practice of those particular duties and virtues, which were suitable to the nature and obligation of their Christian profession.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

17 *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye* Since therefore you are, as Christians, united in the great principles of the faith and religion of the gospel,

Ver. 17. *This I say and testify in the Lord, μαρτυρομαι εν Κυριω.*] Though the original word, which we render, "testify," bears without question that signification; yet it is used by the best Greek writers in a stronger sense, viz. 'to beseech and earnestly intreat.' And this is unquestionably the meaning of it in the place before us: and to render this intreaty yet stronger, he adds, 'I earnestly beseech you in or by the Lord; by his authority, or by the greatness of his love, or by the sincerity of your love and regard to him;' which may be all implied in the expression, and which were arguments very proper to affect and prevail with them.

That ye no longer walk as other Gentiles walk.] "Walking" denotes the behaviour and course of a man's life, in St. Paul's manner of expression; an expression that may be justified by the best Greek writers: *παλειν χρονον* signifies in Pindar, 'to pass the time of life,' Ol. 1. 185. the other Gentiles he speaks of, were those who remained in their idolatrous and wicked practices. And therefore when the apostle exhorts the Ephesians, "not to walk as the other Gentiles did," he means, 'that they should not practise their vices, nor allow themselves in those immoralities, which they committed with greediness and pleasure.'

Ibid. In the vanity of their mind.] By this expression seems to be meant 'their false and inconclusive imaginations and reasonings, that had no foundation in truth, but which led them into the

'most

ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind;

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all iniquity with greediness.

20 But

gospel, this is what I exhort and beseech you, in the name, and by the authority of Christ, that you do not henceforth live by those corrupt principles upon which the other Gentiles act, nor allow yourselves in the vices which they indulge, following the dictates of their vain and mistaken minds;

The natural light of their understandings being intirely obscured through their corrupt passions and prejudices; being wholly estranged in temper and affection from that life which God prescribes and approves, through that wilful and wretched ignorance which prevails in them, and through that callousness and obstinacy of mind, which they have contracted by their vices:

Who being abandoned and grown desperately wicked, have delivered themselves over to the most lascivious practices; so that they commit the vilest impurities with eagerness, and make their gains by these abominable iniquities.

But

'most absurd and dangerous errors, both of judgment and practice.' Of this kind of vanity the apostle speaks, Rom. i. 21. "they became vain in their imaginations;" or, as the original word properly signifies, 'in their thoughts or reasonings.' And this was in reality the source both of their idolatries in worship, and their immoralities in practice.

Ver. 18. *Having their understanding darkened;*] viz. through contracted habits of vice, and those strong prejudices and corrupt principles, in which they had been brought up, which prevent the access of light and knowledge, darken the understanding, and pervert the judgment.

Being estranged from the life of God.] The life of God is properly a life of moral virtue and righteousness, since the whole conduct of the Divine Being is regulated by the eternal rules of righteousness and truth. To be estranged from this life implies a contrariety to it in disposition and practice. In this moral sense the original word we render "estranged," is used by the best Greek writers; it is used to denote the natural aversion which brutes have to wine, *Æl. V. H. l. 2. c. 40.* and any thing that is contrary to the moral disposition and character of a person, *Id. l. 4. c. 4.* and is a just and perfect description of the temper and behaviour of the idolatrous Gentiles.

Because of the blindness of their heart.] *πρωσις* properly signifies the hardness or callousness of a man's skin, and particularly that of his feet and hands, contracted by frequent 'exercise and labour.' Hence it is rendered in the margin of your bibles "by hardness." And this seems to be the true rendering, because the apostle had spoken of the darkness of their understanding, and the ignorance that was in them just before, and unquestionably their being wholly alienated from the life of God, was the effect of a callous, hardened, and insensible conscience. And thus the apostle seems to explain it in the verse immediately following,

Ver. 19. *Who being past feeling, απληγνηκοτες.*] Some copies read here "*απληπικότες*, who being "without hope, or desperate;" which reading seems to have been followed by the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate versions: but the most valuable copies have it as we read it. It is rendered by Heyschius *αναίδητοι*, "insensible." The word primarily signifies 'to be void of sorrow,' or, 'to be hardened against all impressions of grief.' Hence it is used to denote persons 'who through despair or desperation have thrown off all sense of misery and grief;' the effect of which is, 'the giving over all endeavour, and ceasing all manner of care and labour to free one's self from such a state.' Hence it implies, in the place before us, 'the last and worst state of wickedness and vice; men so intirely abandoned and corrupt, as to have no remorse and sorrow of conscience, for the iniquities they committed; desperately wicked, hardened and insensible in vice, and who of consequence had thrown off all care and regard of virtue.' So that, as the apostle expresses it in the words following,

They gave themselves over to lasciviousness;] they abandoned themselves over to the most flagrant impurities;

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And

But this should not be your practice. Ye have learned the doctrine of Christ, and been so fully instructed in the nature of his religion, as to know that it absolutely forbids and condemns these vices.

Since therefore you have heard his gospel preached to you, and have been taught the truths of it, pure and incorrupt, even as it was preached by Jesus himself:

Renounce intirely your former conversation, and put off your former selves, that old life and character, which became exceedingly corrupt through the dictates and influence of those evil affections, which deceive men to their ruin.

Instead of cherishing and hearkening to these, cultivate in your minds new dispositions, and govern yourselves by new desires.

And

impurities; for the original word signifies 'an unbridled inclination and addictedness to all manner of natural and unnatural lusts.' And thus, as he adds:

They worked all uncleanness with greediness.] The word we render "greediness," signifies properly "covetousness," and is generally rendered so in our version; nor do I see reason to depart from the usual meaning in the place before us; the sense of which I take to be, 'that they committed the most unnatural lusts through covetousness;' which might be easily shewn from many instances, did not the nature of the subject forbid me.

Ver. 20. *But you have not so learned Christ.*] That is, 'the christian doctrine, in which you have been instructed, teaches you quite other things.' "Christ" here, evidently means, 'the christian religion and doctrine;' for Christ can be no otherwise learned, than by our learning what his religion is. The whole verse may be thus differently rendered, *υμεις δε ουχ οτως*; 'it is not so,' or, 'it should not be so, with you;' or, 'this is not your practice:' *εμαθετε τον Χριστον*; 'ye have learned Christ; christianity, in which you have been instructed, hath reformed you;' and I think this seems to convey the most emphatical meaning. The very same abrupt but significant manner of speaking you have, Luke xxii. 26.

Ver. 21. *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him.*] I should rather render the words: 'since, or inasmuch as, you have heard him, and been instructed in him, even as the truth is in Jesus.' They had heard his gospel preached, and been faithfully instructed in the nature of it, "even as the truth is in Jesus," as the truth was taught by Christ himself, even the plain uncorrupted truth of the gospel. And thus the whole connection will be strong and beautiful: 'the Gentiles abandon themselves to the worst of vices; but it is not so, or, it should not be so with you. You have learned the doctrine of Christ; for you have heard it preached in its uncorrupted simplicity and purity.' Or, what I rather prefer, the twenty-first and twenty-second verses may be connected together, thus: 'Since ye have heard him, and been instructed in him as the truth is in Jesus.'

Ver. 22. *That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man.*] So that their having learnt, and been instructed in the nature of Christianity, the apostle lays down as the foundation of his ensuing exhortation. "The old man," which the apostle speaks of, evidently denotes the corrupt principles and wicked practices of their Gentile state, from whence arose their moral character; and therefore he adds, "concerning the former conversation, the old man," 'their former, their ancient selves and characters, relating to their whole behaviour as idolatrous and profligate Gentiles,' which was "corrupt according to the lusts of deceit:" i. e. 'through the influence of those sensual affections and passions, which are the most deceitful guides of action that any person can possibly hearken to, and which will delude men to certain ruin, who blindly and implicitly follow them.' In opposition to this, the apostle farther advises them

Ver. 23. *To be renewed in the spirit of their mind.*] i. e. 'to cultivate that new temper, those excellent dispositions and habits, which became their christian profession and character;' since

24 *And put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

And put on that new man, that new character and conversation, which is the great obligation of your christian profession, and which is formed, in imitation of, and in obedience to, the command of God, by the rules of righteousness and true holiness.

25 *Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

And therefore, since falshood and deceit are inconsistent with these requirements, abstain from all kind of lies, and let every man speak the truth to his neighbour, and to all he converses with; since, as Christians, we are all members of the same body, and therefore cannot deceive one another without injuring ourselves.

26 *Be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*

If you have any just occasion to be angry, take heed that it doth not grow intemperate and draw you into sin. Harbour not your resentments too long, nor suffer them to grow into malice and revenge.

27 *Neither give place to the devil.*

Beware that you do not thus give occasion to the devil to lead you to commit the most heinous crimes, nor to the enemies of Christianity to reproach and slander you.

28 *Let*

If

the mind can be no otherwise renewed and altered, but by its embracing new principles, and, in consequence of these, cherishing new habits and desires, and rectifying all the disordered passions and affections of it. And, in consequence of this, he advises them

Ver. 24. *To put on the new man.*] To form themselves into a new behaviour; to wear a different profession and character from what they had worn before; to put away their vices, and practise the virtues of the christian life. In these expressions, of *putting off the old man*, and *putting on the new one*, many think that the apostle alludes to the custom of baptism; because those who were baptized laid aside their old garments, going naked into the water, in token of laying aside their former sins, and immediately after baptism put on garments which were white, to denote the purity of their conversation, that became them as Christians. But I do not apprehend, that this custom of exchanging garments was so ancient as the times of the apostle; and I should rather think he refers to the manners and habits of the Ephesians themselves, who, as Athenæus tells us, discovered great effeminacy and luxury in the richness of their garments. But then, as the apostle exhorts them, not to put off their old garments, and to put on new ones, but “to put off *the old man*, and “put on *the new man*,” he seems particularly to allude to their theatrical representations, in which the actors put on different characters, and took on themselves the persons of other men. This was also customary in their solemn festivals, and especially in the festivals of Bacchus; when the Ephesians used to disguise themselves by masks, running about the streets with their images in their hands, singing songs in honour of Bacchus, and committing many disorders and violences. This allusion makes the expressions of *putting off the old* and *putting on the new man*, very significant and just.

Ver. 26. *Be ye angry and sin not.*] The expression may be rendered, *Are ye angry?* See that ye do not sin, *viz.* by indulging it too far, and harbouring your resentment too long. The expression is no command to be angry, whichever way it be translated. If without the interrogation, the full sentence will be, ‘if ye are angry, sin not, *viz.* by being hard to be pacified, or allowing yourselves in an irreconcilable temper;’ which is what the apostle signifies by the proverbial expression, “Let not the sun go down upon your anger;” which is not to be understood literally, as though it were always sinful to keep anger after sun-set. The plain meaning of the whole advice is: ‘be not angry without just occasion; and whenever you are, be of a reconcilable spirit, and carry not your displeasure against the offender too far, either in measure or duration.’

27. *Neither give place to the devil.*] *Διδοῦναι τόπον*, ‘to give place,’ is used by the best Greek writers to

28 *Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

If any one through necessity and want, through idleness and sloth, hath robbed and stolen from another, let him steal no more: but rather let him work, and provide himself a livelihood by the labour of his own hands; that he may not barely have enough for his own supply, but to give somewhat also to supply the wants of others.

29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying; that it may minister grace to the hearers.*

Let no corrupt and offensive words ever proceed out of your mouth, but such as are good and profitable in their nature, and suitable to any present circumstance and occasion, that so they may be grateful and profitable to those who hear them.

30 *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye*

Take great care that ye do not offend the holy Spirit of God, by any kind of discourses unsuitable to

to signify, the giving an handle, occasion, or opportunity to any thing; and so the meaning will be, 'give no occasion, by long resentment or settled anger, to the devil to draw you into those sins, which are the natural and frequent effects of wrath settled into hatred or malice.' Or the word, which we render devil, may, and often doth, signify slanderer, or accuser; and so the advice will be; 'give no occasion to men to accuse you of an irreconcilable and implacable spirit, who would be glad to reproach you, and the religion you profess, on this account.'

Ver. 28. *Let him that stole, steal no more.*] Thefts were very frequent amongst the idolatrous Gentiles; so that amongst several nations it was allowed by law. But I do not apprehend that the apostle refers to these tolerated, authorised thefts, but to those kinds which were practised by necessitous, indolent persons, and were contrary to all law, and liable to be punished by the civil magistrate. This seems plain from what he adds:

Rather let him labour.] 'Let him not, if he professes Christianity, think to be maintained in idleness, by the charity of Christians;' suitable to that advice which he gives to the Thessalonians: "We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat; for we hear that there are some which walk amongst you disorderly, working not at all, 2 Thess. iii. 11. Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread," ver. 12. exactly agreeable to what follows in the place before us:

Working with his hands the thing that is good.] *το αγαθον*, "a livelihood," or such a support, as may not only be barely sufficient for himself, but may enable him to give somewhat to other persons who are in distress.

Ver. 29. *Corrupt communication.*] The original word denotes primarily that which is corrupted and spoiled by age; hence it is used by the best writers to signify idle, insignificant, unprofitable, and evil discourse; and in this large sense it seems to be used in this place, and not to signify only one particular kind of bad conversation; as seems plain not only from the original notion of the word, but from what the apostle expressly opposes to it:

But that which is good, to the use of edifying.] In the original it is quite otherwise: "but that which is good, viz. in itself, or proper and fit for the edification of necessity," i. e. 'which may contribute to necessary edification,' or, as the word *χρησις* may be rendered *use* or *occasion*, the meaning may be: 'such kind of discourse as is suitable and profitable to the present occasion and opportunity;' which well agrees with what follows:

That it may minister grace to the hearers.] i. e. 'That it may be grateful and acceptable to such as hear it.' In this sense the word *χρησις* is used by Pindar, Xenophon, Polybius, and other the best Greek authors. So that, according to this advice, we should endeavour to render our conversation profitable, and acceptable to all that hear us.

Ver. 30. *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.*] The original word, though in its primary sense it signifies 'to grieve,' yet is often used by the best Greek writers, for "offending" and "displeasing." And this is the proper meaning of it here, since the Spirit of God is not subject to any sorrow or grief. Thus Isaiah speaks of 'vexing God's Spirit,' which the Psalmist calls 'provoking the

ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

32 *But be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

C H A P. V.

1 *Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.*

2 *And walk in love, as Christ*

to the purity of your christian profession; lest ye should forfeit those extraordinary gifts, by which you are sealed, as God's peculiar property and people, to the day of final and eternal redemption.

And therefore beware of allowing yourselves in bitter and reproachful language, of indulging to resentment, passion, and anger; and let that clamour, reviling and cursing, which are the too frequent effects of such a temper, be never heard amongst you, nor give way to a malicious, revengeful spirit:

But treat one another with great goodness and kindness, with tender compassion and affection, forgiving one another your mutual offences, according as God hath forgiven you your offences, in and through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

Imitate in these respects the example of God your heavenly Father, as becomes the character and relation you bear to him of his dear and beloved children.

And let your whole behaviour be directed and influenced

‘most high God.’ So that grieving the holy Spirit of God, signifies properly offending God himself, who conferred upon the primitive Christians those extraordinary and miraculous gifts, which are, in an especial manner, called “the Spirit of God,” because immediately proceeding from the influence of his power and goodness. And as these gifts were vouchsafed in token of God's acceptance of the persons, on whom they were conferred, and were thereby a kind of impression or seal that God put on them, to assure them of the future inheritance of his children; so, if persons offended God by their vices, in such a manner as to provoke him to withdraw these gifts from them, they forfeited this seal of their right to the heavenly inheritance, and were left in a state of condemnation: And as these gifts were granted in confirmation of a religion, which enjoined the greatest purity of heart and conversation, and the perpetual study of love and peace; the apostle by placing this exhortation, “of not offending the Spirit of God,” between the commands to abstain from all corrupt conversation, and a bitter, wrathful, revengeful spirit and behaviour, seems plainly to intimate, that, by these sins, God was in a peculiar manner displeased and offended.

Ver. 2. *For a sweet smelling savour.*] The two first verses of this fifth chapter evidently relate to the same head of advice, with the last verses of the foregoing, and therefore should not have been separated.—The expression of ‘a sweet-smelling savour’ is taken from the Jewish sacrifices; which when they were offered to God with a spirit of true devotion and piety, he is said ‘to have smelled a sweet savour,’ denoting their being as acceptable and grateful to him, as the sweetest savour can be pleasing and refreshing to the nostrils of men. And thus, as Christ became voluntarily obedient to the death of the cross for the salvation of sinners, the sacrifice which he thus made of himself was highly acceptable to God his Father, both as it was an argument of filial piety towards him, and the highest affection and love to them. And as he thus shewed his love to all who believe in him, by dying for them, this is one of the strongest reasons, why all Christians should bear the warmest affection and love to each other; since otherwise they will appear to be greatly destitute of his spirit, and act contrary to the peculiar and distinguishing obligations of his gospel. “Let us therefore walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, by practising all those virtues of the Christian life, by which alone we can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and by abstaining from all those immoralities of conversation and practice, which are unsuitable to our Christian profession and character.” This will be a substantial evidence of the sincerity of our profession, and an abundant argument that we are meet for, and worthy of, the future inheritance of the children of God.

Christ also hath loved us, and bath given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. influenced by the dictates of love, that you may be herein followers of Christ, who loved us, and gave the most signal proof of it, by offering up himself on the cross an offering and sacrifice of propitiation, grateful and acceptable to God his heavenly Father.

The apostle proceeds in this chapter to lay down several practical duties of very great importance, and which seem to be many of them particularly suited to the condition and circumstances of the Ephesians.

TEXT.

PARAPHRASE.

3 But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints.

Farther, be ye so far from allowing yourselves in fornication, or any other kind of uncleanness, or that sordidly covetous spirit which is so frequently the occasion of these impurities, that let them never be mentioned amongst you without abhorrence. For this is suitable to the obligations and purity of your christian profession.

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which

Let nothing of obscenity mix in any part of your conversation; let there be nothing of that idle and

Ver. 3. Or covetousness.] Interpreters of great note think that the word which we render covetousness, rather refers to debauchery and lust, than the inordinate love of money. And their reason for so thinking is, because they imagine that covetousness comes in abruptly into a catalogue of sins, which peculiarly relate to fleshly lusts. And it must be owned that the original word is so used by the best classical authorities. But as many of the most flagrant crimes of this kind were submitted to, through an insatiable love of money, or proper covetousness, I do not think it necessary, at least, to leave the more plain and ordinary meaning of the word.

*Inde fere scelerum causæ — sæva cupido
Indomiti census — Sed quæ reverentia legum?
Quis metus, aut pudor est unquam, properantis avari?*

Juven. 14. 173.

Ver. 4. Neither filthiness.] The former advice related to impurity of action; this to obscenity of conversation and speech, which is here condemned by the apostle, as inconsistent with the obligation of our christian profession; in which many, who call themselves Christians, give themselves very scandalous liberties, to the shocking of chaste ears, and to the breach of decency and all good manners. And though some persons are ashamed to allow themselves in the grosser liberties of this kind, yet are they greatly blameworthy upon another account, which the apostle immediately after mentions, under the words

Foolish talking and jesting.] By which two words he doth not condemn the innocent pleasantries and mirth of a cheerful conversation; but that kind of obscene discourse, which we mean by the French expression of a *double entendre*; when men, for the sake of merriment and sport, convey lewd sentiments and thoughts to others, under chaste and cleanly expressions. This seems to be the proper meaning of the word *ευτραπεία*, *jesting*, in this place. The original sense of it is, 'an artfully-turned discourse.' And accordingly it is used either in a good sense, to denote proper wit; and in a bad sense, to signify any kind of lewd and scurrilous discourse, that artfully conveys an ill meaning. And, as it is here joined with filthiness and foolish talking, it is plain that the apostle intended by it, such ambiguous forms of speech, as are intended to raise mirth by dishonest and corrupt

which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.

5 *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

6 *Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God, upon the children of disobedience.*

7 *Be*

Take

and foolish discourse, which persons often indulge, under the notion of pleasantry and mirth; for these things are unbecoming your christian character. Rather endeavour to render your speech grateful and profitable to those you converse with, and abound in thanksgivings to God for all his mercies.

For of this you have been already abundantly informed, that no whoremonger, nor any person who indulges himself in any lewd practices or discourses, nor any fraudulent, covetous person, who makes his money his idol, can have right to the privileges of the kingdom and church of Christ on earth, nor to the blessings of the kingdom of God in heaven.

Suffer not yourselves to be imposed on and deceived by the vain and false pretences of corrupt men, who may endeavour to persuade you, that these and the like vices may be indulged with safety. For nothing is more certain, than that these are the sins which draw down the displeasure of God upon wicked and disobedient men.

corrupt meanings. This amongst some passeth for wit, but in the judgment of the apostle it is foolish talking; and in the opinion of all wise and sober persons, it is rudeness and ill manners.

And this advice was the more necessary, because the Gentiles greatly delighted in such kind of discourse; not only in their common conversation, and at their meals, but even in their very religious festivals*. And what is more observable is; That the Ephesians were remarkable for it to a proverb, and are particularly taken notice of upon account of it, by Plautus in one of his comedies†.

Which are not convenient.] The meaning intended to be conveyed by these words is stronger than the expression: "which are not convenient;" i. e. 'which are greatly unbecoming, and highly displeasing to God;' as it follows in the next verses.

But rather giving of thanks.] Some learned writers think that the original word doth not denote here, "giving of thanks," but that kind of conversation which is innocent in its nature, and yet chearful and agreeable to those we converse with; according to what we have in the twenty-ninth verse of the former chapter, where the apostle orders, that our conversation should be such, as may "minister grace," i. e. 'may be acceptable and grateful to the hearers.' And if this be the meaning, it will stand in a just opposition to that *foolish talking and jesting*, which he blames immediately before; and the sense of the original word, and its use in other authors, will well enough allow this meaning. But I apprehend the more common meaning of the word, *thanksgiving*, will very well suit the apostle's design: for what can be a more proper cure of that foolish talking and scurrilous mirth, which the apostle condemns, than the employing our hearts and tongues in grateful acknowledgments of God's goodness? Not to add, that the pleasure proceeding from a thankful spirit, and a conversation directed by virtue and piety, is much nobler than what can ever be derived from the loose and wanton discourses of corrupt and thoughtless men. The same advice he gives to the Colossians, ch. iii. 15, 17.

Ver. 5. *Covetous man, who is an idolater.*] The addition of this word, *idolater*, seems to determine the sense of the original word to be properly a covetous person, who esteems his riches as his god; by devoting his whole life to the pursuit of them, and placing all his hope, confidence, and trust in them.

Ver. 6. *Vain words.*] i. e. 'With false and deceitful representations, void of solidity and truth;' for the proper meaning of the word is 'to be void and destitute of any thing.'

* Vid. Spanh. in Aristoph. Ran. v. 395.

† Mil. Glor. Act. 3. Sc. 1. v. 47.—53.

7 *Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

Take care therefore, that ye be not partakers of their guilt, lest ye share with them in their punishment.

8 *For ye were sometimes darkness: but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light.*

It was no wonder indeed that ye indulged to these crimes, whilst ye were ignorant of God, and of the nature of true religion. But now you are instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and of his gospel, let all such actions be your abhorrence; and let it be your care to practise all those virtues, which become that superior light and knowledge.

9 *For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.*

Even those virtues of universal goodness, justice, and veracity, which are the great obligations of the spiritual religion of Christ, and which are but the natural effect of the knowledge you have received by his gospel.

10 *Proving what is acceptable to the Lord.*

Shewing hereby that ye discern and approve what is well-pleasing and acceptable to Christ.

11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,*

On the contrary, be careful that ye never approve of, nor partake in, those corrupt practices of the Gentiles,

Ver. 8. *Ye were formerly darkness.*] i. e. 'as Gentiles in a state of the deepest ignorance.' *Now are ye light in the Lord,* i. e. 'instructed in the knowledge of God, and of true religion, by the gospel of Christ;'—darkness and light being frequently used in this metaphorical sense by profane writers.

Walk as children of the light.] At verse 6, we have "*children of disobedience,*" i. e. 'very wicked and profligate men.' And thus "*children of the light*" are 'persons instructed with true principles and sentiments of religion;' a manner of expression frequent in the Old Testament, and that may be paralleled by many instances from uninspired writers. By "*walking*" as children of the light, the apostle means 'abounding in those virtues and good works, to which the knowledge we have, as Christians, obliges us.' For this is what the apostle adds:

Ver. 9. *The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, &c.*] The Christian religion is several times denoted by the word *Spirit*, because "the gifts of the Spirit," were the great demonstration and evidence of the truth of it; as it is also frequently styled *Christ*, from the great author of it. Now as the universal practice of virtue will certainly be the effect of Christianity rightly understood, and firmly believed, hence the apostle calls *goodness, righteousness, and truth*, "*fruits of the Spirit.*"

Ver. 10. *Proving what is acceptable to the Lord.*] The most frequent signification of the original word, which we render, *proving*, is to *apprehend, discern, or search out*: a sense which will answer perfectly well to the place before us: "*Walk as children of the light,*" '*searching out what is well-pleasing to the Lord.*' Sometimes it signifies to approve any thing when fully apprehended and discerned; and in this sense also the apostle's connection will be good: "*Walk as children of the light,*" '*approving,*' '*or, as those who fully approve what is acceptable to the Lord.*'

Ver. 11. *Unfruitful works of darkness.*] The meaning is, not merely such works as produce no good effect to those who do them, but such as are attended with the most mischievous and destructive consequences: a manner of expression very common amongst the best writers in all languages. It is probable, that the apostle, in these words, refers to the very mysteries of the Heathen worship, in which the greatest enormities were practised, and which it was unlawful to make public: and this I the rather think, not only because he says at verse 12, "*it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret,*" but, because the word *συγκοινωνεῖτε*, which we render, "*have fellowship with,*" is the word which profane authors use to denote a participation in their religious rites and mysteries*.

But rather reprove them.] The original word signifies both "*to reprove,*" and "*to convince,*" because all wise reproof is designed for conviction; and so the meaning will be, that Christians ought to en-

* See Philost. vit. Apol. l. 4. d. 161. cap. 2. init.

darkness, but rather reprove them.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things, which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith:
"Awake thou that sleepest,
"and arise from the dead,
"and Christ shall give thee
"light."

15 See then that ye walk
circumspectly,

Gentiles, which are the effect of their ignorance, and unprofitable and destructive in their consequences. But rather reprove and convince the doers of such things by friendly admonitions, and especially by the light of an unblameable and virtuous conversation.

And this is the more necessary, because their secret vices are so abominable, that it is a reproach to human nature, not only to conform to their example, but even so much as to mention the sins they are guilty of.

Now as it is the nature of light to discover objects, and render them visible to the eye; so in like manner do you discover the turpitude of these secret practices, convincing those who indulge them, of the evil of them, by a truly christian behaviour and example, agreeable to the light and knowledge you have received from the christian revelation.

To which purpose may be applied those words of a certain writer: "Awake, and shake off thy sloth, thou who art oppress'd with ignorance, and arise from that state of inactivity and darkness in which thou art buried: apply thyself to the gospel of Christ, and from thence thou shalt receive the light and knowledge which thou needest."

Since therefore ye enjoy the benefit of the gospel revelation,

deavour, by the light of a good conversation, to reprove the vices of their Gentile neighbours, that so they may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and thus persuade them to forsake them. And this he inculcates upon them, from their obligations as Christians, as well as from the scandalous nature of the secret immoralities of the Heathens.

Ver. 13. *All things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light.*] This rendering doth not appear to me to express the apostle's sense. He advis'd them, in the verse just before, to reprove, convince, and shew the iniquity of the unfruitful works of darkness; viz. by walking, as he expresses himself, verse 8. *as the children of the light.* In this thirteenth verse he pursues the same metaphor of light, and tells them, that *all things*, viz. 'all those things which were done of the Heathens in secret,' *were discovered*, 'the moral turpitude of them discovered, and the doers of them rendered ashamed of them,' *being reprov'd*, i. e. 'being convinced and demonstrated to be wicked and abominable' *by the light*, i. e. 'either by the christian religion, or by the lustre of an unblameable and virtuous behaviour.' And thus the gospel, and the good example of sincere Christians, will either of them, justly deserve the name of light; since *whatever doth make manifest is light*; or, as the words may as well be rendered, *it is the light that makes manifest or discovers every thing.*

Ver. 14. *Wherefore he says.*] The quotation here made by the apostle is not found in any one place of the Old Testament. Probably he cites only the sense of some passage, without strictly regarding the words; or what I should rather think, some sentence spoken by our blessed Saviour, though not recorded by the Evangelists, in their history of him; as he doth in another place, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. Whosoever he refers to, the quotation is apposite to his purpose, viz. to shew, that Christianity would abundantly enlighten with the knowledge of true religion, all such as would seriously and impartially consider it.

Ver. 15. *Walk circumspectly;*] with great exactness and care, so as neither to become partakers with the Gentiles in their crimes, nor to expose yourselves to their malice and anger, by an imprudent

circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. revelation, see that ye behave with that exactness; circumspection, and care, which becomes persons who are partakers of true wisdom and knowledge, and that ye do not allow yourselves in any of those crimes which proceed from ignorance, and are an argument of folly.

16 *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* And thus by means of an useful and virtuous conversation, ye will purchase and secure the present opportunity, and be more likely to preserve yourselves from the evils and dangers of these perilous times.

17 *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* Since therefore the times are so dangerous, act with great prudence and caution, as persons who understand the obligations of your Christian profession, and who at the same time have a proper regard to your own preservation and safety.

18 *And be not drunk with wine,* Particularly beware of allowing yourselves in drunkenness,

dent rebuke of their very vices. You are to reprove and endeavour to convince them, yet not so as to enflame their passions against yourselves, which is an argument of folly; but so as to gain them over to virtue, which is an argument of prudence and wisdom.

Ver. 16. *Redeeming the time.*] viz. "by this exact and circumspect walking:" the time is to be redeemed by such an unblameable and virtuous conversation, as may put vice out of countenance, as may convince bad men of the error of their ways, and gain them over to the approbation of Christian virtue. "So that redeeming the time," or, as the original words properly and strictly signify, "purchasing, or buying off the opportunity;" denotes the doing all we can, by a prudent christian behaviour, to render the present opportunity safe and secure to ourselves, by buying up, preventing or deferring those evils that might otherwise befall us: and to this nothing could be more effectual than the advice which the apostle gives 'of walking exactly or circumspectly.' For if by the lustre of a good conversation they gained over bad men to Christianity, they lessened the number of their enemies, and by consequence the greatness of their danger; and if their conversation was wholly unblameable, they could not in the nature of things be worthy of hatred or punishment, and might therefore reasonably expect to live safe and unmolested. I think the English expression 'of gaining the time,' will take in the proper meaning of the apostle; especially as the original expression seems to refer to debtors, who by some valuable consideration buy off the fixed time for the payment of their debts, or as we say, 'gain farther time for the payment of them.' So, when the apostle wrote this epistle, the days were evil; the time was extremely dangerous, and the profession of Christianity very hazardous. What was the prudence particularly requisite in such circumstances? Why, to buy off, to purchase, or to gain time, that those evils might not come upon them, which an imprudent conduct would certainly expose them to. And thus the advice will be the same, with what we have in the parallel epistle, Col. iv. 5. "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time."

Ver. 17. *Be not unwise.*] 'do not act without thought and understanding.' "But consider what is the will of the Lord," i. e. 'though you are not to endeavour to avoid persecution, by partaking in the crimes of the Gentiles; so neither are you needlessly to expose yourselves to danger, but to use all prudent methods to secure yourselves from it.' I should imagine that the apostle in this advice, refers to the Bacchanals, or feasts of Bacchus, in which those who celebrated them acted as though they were mad and beside themselves. In opposition to which, he commands them not to be *apovos*, 'not to act as persons out of their mind, but a wise and sober part, as persons fully apprised of their interest and duty.' And that he refers to this, seems plain from the following advice,

Ver. 18. *Be not drunk with wine.*] In the feasts of Bacchus they allowed themselves in the most criminal excesses; as Ovid expresses it, 'they made themselves mad with wine,' *Est mota insania vino*, Met. 3. v. 536. and were excited by it to many outrageous and immoral actions.

wine, wherein is excess, but
be filled with the Spirit.

19 Speaking to yourselves
in psalms, and hymns, and
spiritual songs, singing and
making melody in your hearts
to the Lord.

drunkenness, for this is an instance of very criminal excess. Rather labour by an universal temperance, to preserve and exercise those gifts of the Spirit, which are vouchsafed you, that you may be filled with an abundant encrease of them.

Instead of those impure and drunken songs, which the Heathens use in their festivals, let your conversation be enlivened and refreshed by those religious psalms, and hymns, and songs, which are often dictated by the influence of the Spirit; that your songs and psalms, thus flowing from pure affections of the heart, may be acceptable to the Lord.

REMARKS.

In the pagan scheme of divinity, though they professed to own one supreme God and Father, yet they ascribed almost each particular blessing of life to some inferior deity; corn to Ceres, and wine to Bacchus, whom they used to praise on these accounts in hymns and odes made for that purpose, and sung to music: whereas Christianity teaches us to ascribe all good, and to give thanks always for all things, for all the blessings and comforts of life, to God, even the Father. He is the God of nature, who hath created the earth, and enriched it with the fruits of his bounty. Bread for the eater, and seed for the sower, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, are all his gifts; and in the use of them we should acknowledge his bounty. The nobler provisions of the gospel grace, the pardon of our sins, the Spirit and truth that sanctifies us, and the eternal glory that is the object of our present hope, and shall be our future reward, are the effects of his undeserved mercy, and should ever be acknowledged to the praise of his glory, through

Wherein is excess.] This rendering doth by no means come up to the force of St. Paul's word, which signifies 'a wretched and abandoned disposition; the being lost to all virtue, and fit for the worst excesses and enormities; a perfect dissoluteness of mind and behaviour:' so that the meaning of the advice is, *Be not drunk with wine*; because habitual drunkenness is an argument of a very dissolute and profligate temper; or because it leads to, and is the cause of, the most licentious and abandoned behaviour*.

But be ye filled with the Spirit.] i. e. with those spiritual gifts, which however they were freely vouchsafed by God, yet might on the one hand be forfeited and lost by criminal indulgences, and on the other hand be greatly improved by strict temperance, and universal chastity and purity of behaviour; these virtues preparing the mind for, and disposing it to receive divine influences, and tending exceedingly to strengthen, encrease, and perfect all moral and divine accomplishments and gifts.

Ver. 19. *Speaking to yourselves in psalms.*] Or, as it should have been rendered, "Speaking to one another." Plutarch relates, that when Mark Antony entered Ephesus, he was introduced by the women in the habit of the priestesses of Bacchus, and by the men and boys in the habits of Satyrs and Pans; and that the whole city was full of joy, spears wrapt in ivy leaves, psalteries, and pipes, vol. I. p. 926. In the festivals of Bacchus they used to sing songs in honour of him set to music, and to thank and praise him for his benefits to mankind; in opposition to which, the apostle exhorts them to express their chearfulness, and gratitude to God even the Father, for all the blessings of life, by psalms, hymns, and odes, in honour of God, the supreme fountain of all Good, in the name of Jesus Christ, through whom he confers the marks and instances of his goodness upon the children of men.

* Thus *ακαρτωτος* is used to denote both intemperance and lewdness, *Ælian. V. H. l. 2. c. 12.*

through Jesus Christ, by whom this grace hath been manifested to us: gratitude should be the governing frame, and reigning disposition of a Christian's heart, who is under the strongest obligations to the divine goodness, that a reasonable person can possibly be. The exercise of gratitude is pleasing and delightful in its nature, a reasonable service that we owe to God, what is acceptable to him, and will be profitable to us: for, to conclude with the Psalmist's words, spoken in the person of God, "Who so offereth praise, glorifieth me, and to him that offereth his conversation aright, I will shew the salvation of God."

The apostle proceeds in his practical exhortations to the end of this chapter, and to the end of the epistle itself, and particularly inculcates those great and important duties of life, which flow from the several relations which men sustain towards one another, and the various conditions in which Providence may have placed them. The duties of wives and husbands, chap. v. 22—33. of children and parents, chap. vi. 1—4. and of servants and masters, ver. 5—9. The conclusion is an exhortation to the exercise of those particular graces and virtues, which are peculiar to the life and condition of a Christian, and which the apostle compares to the several pieces of a soldier's armour. He ends with an apostolic benediction and prayer.

T E X T.

P A R A P H R A S E.

20 *Giving thanks always for all things, unto God even the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Cultivate especially an habitually grateful frame of spirit, giving thanks continually, for all your mercies relating to life and godliness, unto God even the Father, the supreme fountain of all Good, in and through the name and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God,*

Let the sense of the divine authority, and a becoming fear of offending God, who hath constituted all the various relations and conditions of life, prevail with you to maintain a due order amongst yourselves, and to pay that mutual submission to one another, which your respective stations and characters require.

22 *Wives submit yourselves unto*

Particularly let married women, who are Christians,

Ver. 21. *Submitting yourselves one to another.*] i. e. 'each person according to his condition and circumstance in life, in which the providence of God hath placed him; those of inferior stations subjecting themselves to those in higher; and those in the more advanced stations condescending to any offices of friendship and kindness for the benefit of those in lower.'

Through the fear of God.] i. e. 'from a reverential regard to his authority, who, by his providence, hath permitted and ordered the various ranks and stations of mankind, and who requires them to perform the respective duties that flow from them.'

Ver. 22.] *As unto the Lord.*] "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord," 'as though you were submitting yourselves to Christ,' i. e. 'paying an instance of acceptable service to him.' The submission therefore here required, is that which flows from sincere affection and love, for such is the submission we pay to Christ; and this is all a wise and good man will desire, and which no prudent and religious woman will ever refuse.

unto your own husbands as
unto the Lord.

23 *For the husband is the
head of the wife, even as Christ
is the head of the church; and
he is the Saviour of the body.*

24 *Therefore as the church
is subject to Christ, so let the
wives be to their own hus-
bands in every thing.*

25 *Husbands, love your
wives, even as Christ also lov-
ed the church, and gave him-
self for it:*

26 *That*

tians, pay a due submission to their own husbands though unconverted, even as they are subject to Christ by their christian profession, and therefore bound to obey his law.

For as Christ is the proper head and Saviour of the church, which is his body, from which it receives influence and protection; so in like manner the husband is by nature and the law of nations, the head of the wife, from whom she receives protection and support.

And therefore as the church owes an intire subjection to Christ its head and governor, so ought christian wives also to pay a just and due submission and observance to their own husbands, though unbelieving, in all their fit and reasonable requests.

In like manner, do you husbands who are become Christians, bear a sincere and tender affection to your wives, though unbelieving; that by methods of kindness and love, you may win them over from the impurities and idolatries of their Gentile state, to that knowledge and belief of Christianity which may renew and sanctify them: herein imitating Christ, who gave such a proof of his love to the church, as to give himself a sacrifice for the salvation of it:

That

Ver. 23. *And he is the Saviour of the body.*] These words contain a reason for the churches subjection to Christ. "He is not only the head of the church, but the Saviour of the body," i. e. 'of the church which is his body.' The reason then here given of the churches subjection to Christ is two-fold: the church is considered as the body over which Christ is the head to influence and direct it; and in the next place Christ is the Saviour as well as head of this body; and, by consequence, the churches subjection to Christ is founded in gratitude, and results from that protection which he grants it, and those benefits which he confers on it. And from hence it follows, that if the husband be defective in his care of the wife, and refuses her that protection, tenderness, friendship, and support, which the matrimonial relation give her a claim to, the husband so far vacates the reasons and obligations of that submission, which he might otherwise reasonably expect from her, and which an obliged, virtuous wife would gladly pay him.

Ver. 24. *In every thing.*] These words must necessarily be understood in their proper limitation, since no woman can be obliged to pay an absolute, unlimited submission to her husband in every thing. If what he orders be contrary to religion and piety, the wife may and ought to refuse compliance, out of that superior regard she owes to Christ; or if his orders are unreasonable, there doth not seem any good reason for obeying them. How far prudence, and a regard to peace, may sometimes induce a compliance with things unreasonable, though not directly sinful, persons must determine for themselves. The general rule is, submission to the husband in all his just and reasonable desires.

Ver. 25. *Husbands, love your wives.*] These precepts concerning relative duties evidently relate to such persons who were of different religions. Lest women, who were converted to Christianity, should imagine they were discharged from the obligations and duties of the matrimonial contract towards their husbands, if they were either Jews or Heathens, the apostle commands them to live in a reasonable subjection to them, and not to separate themselves from them, or behave unsuitably to the matrimonial relation. And lest the husband, when converted, should hate, or endeavour to divorce his wife, if Jewish or Pagan, the apostle commands him to treat her with the tenderest affection, and by methods of kindness to endeavour to reclaim and purify her from the superstitions of Judaism or, the idolatries of Paganism. This is the application which the apostle intends, when he adds at verse

Ver.

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

That he might sanctify and separate it wholly to himself, having purified it from its former idolatries and vices, by the water of baptism, through the power and influence of his word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

That thus he might unite it to himself clothed in robes of perfect purity, as a spouse gloriously arrayed in her marriage-ornaments, that hath no spot to soil her garments, nor wrinkle to mar the beauty of her face; and that thus it might be holy and unblameable, and hereby become the object of his fixed and unchangeable love.

28 So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: He that loveth his wife, loveth himself.

With such a fervent and steady affection ought men to love their wives, even with as constant and sincere an affection as they bear to their own bodies. For by the original institution of matrimony, the husband and the wife are become one flesh, and by consequence there is the same reason for a man to love his wife as to love himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Not to do it is perfectly unnatural, since as no person hath yet been found to hate his own flesh, but, on the contrary, every one is naturally careful of it, and nourisheth and indulgeth it; so neither ought men to hate their wives, but to afford them, as they are able, the supports and comforts of life; in imitation of Christ, who hath enriched the church with all spiritual and heavenly blessings:

30 For we are members of his

For as he esteems all Christians as the members of

Ver. 26.] *That he might sanctify it.*] As Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it: i. e. 'that he might reform men from their superstitions, idolatries, and vices, and separate them to himself to be his peculiar people and church, so ought men tenderly to love their Heathen or Jewish wives, that thus by kindness and affection they might prove the means of their sanctification and conversion to Christ.'

And cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.] i. e. 'bring it to that belief of the christian faith and doctrine, which should entitle the members of it to that christian baptism, which denoted their putting off the vices of their former lives, and conforming to the purity of the gospel religion.'

Ver. 27. *That he might present it to himself a glorious church.*] I should rather read, as a more emphatical and usual way of expression, 'that he might present it to himself glorious, a church not having spot, &c.' I think the apostle alludes to Pharaoh's daughter, espoused to king Solomon, concerning whom it is said, Psalm xlv. 13. 'The king's daughter is all glorious within,' respecting either her native beauty, that needed not the adventitious ornaments of dress to set it off, or, what I rather think, the splendor of her attire, when seated in the palace with the king. The christian church, clothed with the richer ornaments of piety and virtue, makes a more glorious and lovely appearance in the esteem of God and the redeemer, than Pharaoh's daughter, in all her marriage robes, could in the eyes of Solomon. *L. A. 9. III. i.*

Ver. 30. *For we are the members of his body.*] The argument the apostle useth is this: 'a man's wife is as himself, his very body and flesh; and therefore, as every man nourishes and cherishes his flesh, so ought men to be tenderly affected towards their own wives, united by the matrimonial contract into one body with themselves.' And this the apostle illustrates and enforces from the love of Christ towards the church. 'Even as Christ nourishes and cherishes the church,'

viz.

his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

of his body, and loves them as though they were parts of his flesh and bones; so, according to the original institution of matrimony, the husband should look upon the wife as part of himself, as Adam did when he said of Eve: "She is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

And therefore, as every man is dearer to himself than the nearest relatives in life, it is but reasonable, that as matrimony makes the husband and wife as it were one person and one flesh, the husband should love his wife more than all other persons in the world, according to the first appointment of God by Adam: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," Gen. ii. 24.

32 This is a great mystery. But I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This secret, intimate union in the matrimonial state is very great. And the reason why I speak concerning Christ and his church, and the strict union that is between them; is only that you may each of you apply it to yourselves, and act according to this pattern I set before you.

33 Never-

Let

viz. by the affection he bears to it, and the continual favours he bestows on it. For, says the apostle, "we are the members of his body"; in the same figurative sense, as the husband and wife are one body, so all christians are the several members of, and constitute the one body of Christ. And, as Adam said of Eve, "she is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" so, from the nearness of the relation between Christ and all sincere christians, and that constant affection which he exercises towards them, they may be figuratively said to be of his flesh and of his bones. And of consequence, our blessed Lord, in his tender love towards the church, is a pattern, which every christian should follow, in behaving with that sincere affection towards his wife, even though of a different religion from him, which may reconcile and bring her over to the profession of christianity.

Ver. 32. *This is a great mystery.*] The natural order of the words is: "This mystery is great." "This mystery," this secret union of persons by matrimonial affection is great; and it is called a "mystery" from the indissoluble union that matrimony constitutes, and because the tenderness of the conjugal affection, when sincere, is such as no words can describe. The Papists from this passage would fain prove matrimony to be a sacrament; whereas *μυστήριον* never signifies in the New Testament a sacrament, but something that either was, or is a secret; and therefore can never agree to the nature of a christian sacrament; to the constituting which, a mystery or secret is very far from being essential.

But I speak concerning Christ and the church.] i. e. 'I speak of the sacred and strict union that there is between him and the members of it, only that you may every one of you apply it to each other; for thus the beginning of the thirty-third verse may be rendered' I, says the apostle, 'speak concerning Christ and the church, the protection and love which Christ bears towards it, and the affection and submission which the church pays to Christ' *πλην * και υμεις*, 'only that you may apply it to your selves each one of you. The verb here is defective, and is elegantly supplied from the former part of the sentence. And how they were to apply it, the apostle tells them:

Ver. 33. *Let every one so love his wife as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*] This was the only reason that the apostle brought in this subject; and if persons in a married state would seriously consider this instance, they would never be at a loss how to behave in all circumstances to each other.

* Πλην, κατὰ συμβεβηκός. Arist. de Mor. p. 89. c. 13. "only by accident."

33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Let every man love his wife as himself, and let the wife esteem and reverence her husband.

C H A P. VI.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.

You that are children, do you obey your parents in all their just and lawful commands, according to the institution of Christ; for this is reasonable and fit in itself.

2 Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise:

For this command of honouring thy father and mother, is the first that hath any special and peculiar promise annexed to it;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Even the promise of a prosperous and long life in the present world.

4 And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In like manner do you, who are parents, take care, that you do not, by passion and severity, irritate and exasperate your children; but educate and bring them up by proper discipline and instruction, in the knowledge, and according to the will of Christ.

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.

Do you, who are servants, notwithstanding your conversion to the faith of Christ, obey those who are your lords or masters on earth, with that fear and dread of their displeasure, which becomes your state of slavery and subjection; with great integrity of mind, and free from all fraud and deceit, even as though you were obeying Christ himself.

6 Not

Be

Ver. 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord.] The converted children of unbelieving parents, were not to think themselves freed from that filial duty which they owed them, but were to obey them in the Lord, by virtue of his command, and as far as they could consistent with the obligations of their christian profession; "because this is right," naturally and in itself good, and what therefore Christianity cannot possibly discharge any persons from.

Ver. 2. The first commandment with promise.] i. e. "that hath any immediate, peculiar, and distinguishing promise annexed to it;" in which sense the apostle's observation is both just and pertinent.

Ver. 4. Provoke not your children.] If converted christian parents had children that seemed averse to the faith of Christ, they were not to treat them with severity, nor to exasperate them by an unkind and harsh behaviour; because this might tend to prejudice them against Christianity itself: "but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Or, "they were to nourish and educate them by christian discipline and admonition; watching over their morals, exercising them with proper consideration, giving them good examples, patiently bearing with, or gently correcting them, for their infirmities, and giving them such kind and friendly admonitions and instructions, as might most probably induce them to embrace and profess the Christian religion."

Ver. 5. Servants obey your masters according to the flesh.] *δουλος* is properly 'a slave;' and lest slaves converted to Christianity should imagine, that they were discharged from their subjection to their masters, according to the flesh, because they were become by faith the freed men of Christ their heavenly master; the apostle enjoins them the most exemplary obedience.

With singleness of heart.] i. e. "with the most perfect integrity, as opposed to that fraud, craftiness, deceit, and double-dealing, for which slaves were extremely remarkable, and which is represented as their too general character."

6 *Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart :*

Be diligent in their service, not only whilst their eye is actually upon you, as though you had no higher regard than to please them, but even in their absence ; considering that by this you approve yourselves the servants of Christ, and that you ought to do your part of the will of God sincerely and chearfully :

7 *With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men ;*

Serving them with benevolence and readiness, from the dictates of sincere affection, as though you were immediately obeying the Lord, and not only men ;

8 *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

And you have the greatest encouragement thus to act, because you are fully assured by the gospel, that let the condition of persons be what it will, whether that of bondmen or freemen, yet every one shall be rewarded for every instance of virtue and goodness that he performs.

9 *And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven,*

And in like manner do you, who are their lords or masters, act with a benevolent and friendly spirit towards them, remitting all severity of language and behaviour ; as those that know you are subject to an

With fear and trembling.] The condition of slaves was very miserable, inasmuch as they were wholly subject to the caprice of their masters, and frequently punished by them for the very slightest offences. The apostle therefore puts them in mind, ' that as Christianity did not alter their condition with respect to their earthly masters, but left them equally subject to their power as it found them, they ought ever to maintain the fear of offending them, and had as much cause to tremble at the effects of their displeasure as before.'

Ver. 6. *Not with eye-service as men-pleasers.]* Eye-service is that which men do, only whilst their masters eye is over them, that they may hereby avoid their anger, and secure their approbation. Christianity inculcates higher and better principles of obedience, and teaches servants to do their proper service in their masters absence, as well as in their presence : and that with a view not only to please them, but from this consideration, that fidelity and diligence in their masters work is an instance of obedience and duty to Christ himself ; and that it is the will of God himself, which they are obliged to perform from the heart, from an inward sense of duty, and with great integrity and chearfulness.

Ver. 7. *With good-will doing service to the Lord, and not to men.]* Servants or Slaves should obey their masters from a principle of benevolence, good will, and sincere affection towards them ; and the rather, because whilst they are discharging their duty to their earthly masters, they are actually approving themselves to Christ their heavenly master, and taking the most effectual method to secure his acceptance and future reward : As the apostle adds in the verse immediately following :

Ver. 9. *And ye masters do the same things unto them.]* i. e. ' act by them in like manner : ' i. e. ' with a benevolent and friendly mind, and out of regard to the will and example of Christ, and as persons who desire to approve themselves to God ; the great principles of religion equally respecting persons of all ranks and conditions, and obliging them to a suitable behaviour towards all they are concerned with.'

Forbearing threatening.] Servants or slaves were formerly kept under awe by threatenings and severe usage. The apostle advises christian masters to " forbear," or, as the word is better rendered in the margin, ' moderating, or growing gentle in your threatenings, if possibly by methods of lenity and mildness, you can engage and win them over to their proper duty ; since no wise or good man would ever force even a slave by rigour and hard threatenings to do his work, if he could prevail with him by gentle usage, and friendly persuasion ; no christian, especially, who considers he hath a master in heaven, who rules him by methods of love, and from whom he expects great allowances, for the daily imperfections of his duty and obedience.'

Ver.

heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.

an heavenly Lord, who no more respects the persons of earthly masters, than he doth of their servants, but who in equity will judge them both, and recompense each, according to his doings, with an impartial sentence.

10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

Finally, my brethren, strengthen yourselves in the discharge of your duty, and fortify your minds with all those considerations, motives, and assistances, which the gospel of Christ furnishes you with.

11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Your profession of Christianity may well be compared to a dangerous warfare, and therefore your own safety requires that you should put on the whole armour which God hath provided for your safety, that you may be able to stand and maintain your ground against all the artful and deceitful methods of the devil to circumvent and foil you.

12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against*

For the conflict and struggle we are to maintain, is not merely with men like ourselves of low condition,

Ver. 10. *Be strong in the Lord.*] i. e. 'Be ye established and confirmed in your christian profession; encourage yourselves to constancy and perseverance therein, whatever difficulties you may be subject to upon account of it.'

And in the power of his might.] i. e. 'in his mighty power.' 'Fortify your minds with all those helps and assistances which the Lord, or the gospel of Christ, furnishes you with. Gain those habits of virtue, live in the constant exercise of those divine and excellent graces which christianity recommends, and to which the belief of it naturally leads.' The apostle's exhorting them to be thus "strong in the Lord," as well as the verses immediately following, seem evidently to prove that this is the meaning of the advice; and indeed there can be nothing that more effectually tends to fortify and secure the christian, than the fixed habits of virtue in his mind, and the graces peculiar to the christian temper in full vigour and exercise in his breast.

Ver. 11. *Put on therefore the whole armour of God.*] The apostle compares the state of christians, then labouring under persecution, to a very severe and dangerous warfare; and therefore that they might be effectually covered for their defence, he exhorts them to "put on the whole armour of God," i. e. 'that excellent armour of proof, with which God had provided them in the gospel of Christ; that they might be able to stand.' The word is both a military and agonistical term, and signifies, that they might be able effectually to maintain their ground, both against the force and subtlety of the enemies of their salvation. And to put them in mind that they were in danger from both, he not only compares their condition to a warfare, in which the exertion of their utmost strength and vigour would be necessary; but to the ancient game of wrestling. To this the apostle refers in those words:

That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not, &c.] Plutarch tells us, Symp. l. 2. p. 638 *, that wrestling was the most artful and subtle of all the ancient games, and that the name of it was derived from a word, which signifies to throw a man down by deceit and craft. And it is certain that persons who understand this exercise have many fetches, and turns and changes of posture, which they make use of to supplant and trip up their adversaries. And it is with great justice, that a state of persecution is compared with it; since many are the arts, arising from the terrors of worldly evil on the one hand, and the natural love which men have to life, liberty, plenty, and the pleasures of life, on the other, that the devil makes use of to circumvent and foil them.

Ver. 12. *For we wrestle not with flesh and blood.*] The expression of "flesh and blood," may signify, either men of low degree, in opposition to the powerful, rich, and mighty; in which sense it some-

* Τεχνικώτατος καὶ πανουργώτατος τῶν ἀθλημάτων τῆς παλιν ἡσάν, ἢ γὰρ παλιν μοι δοκεῖ τῶν παλαιῶν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ δι' ἀπάτης, καὶ δολῆς καταβαλλῆ.

gainst principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

14 Stand

Stand

times occurs in the sacred writings: or else it may denote men in general, in opposition to evil spirits. Thus, "flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee," plainly signifies, no man hath revealed it. And as we interpret these words, so also must we those which follow, "principalities and powers," as denoting either the princes and governors of the present world, in opposition "to flesh and blood," the lower part of mankind; or the several orders of evil and apostate spirits in opposition to men in general.

The rulers of the darkness of this world.] i. e. "either the rulers and governors of this dark and ignorant world, those temporal princes and magistrates that governed the obstinate Jews, or idolatrous Gentiles, who were, literally, the rulers of that dark and ignorant age, as the word *αἰών* signifies, or else those evil and malignant spirits, who retained men in ignorance, and thereby kept them under the power of idolatry and vice." The apostle farther adds:

Spiritual wickednesses in high,] or as it is in the Greek, "heavenly things," or "*places*." Spiritual wickednesses, or, as it is in the original, the "spiritual things of wickedness," may signify either, as before, wicked and apostate spirits, or, what I rather incline to think, the wicked and perverse corrupters of the christian doctrine. Christians are frequently styled *οἱ πνευματικοί*, "spiritual men," 1 Cor. ii. 15. and the great things of Christianity are styled *πνευματικά*, "spiritual things," 1 Cor. ii. 13. Now a truly spiritual man was one, who was under the influence of the Spirit of God; or, considered as a soldier, one who armed himself with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, or the gospel of Christ. Now who are the natural adversaries to these truly spiritual persons, but these *πνευματικά της πονηρίας*, "these spiritual wickednesses;" these persons, who pretending to the spirit, endeavoured to corrupt the simplicity of the faith of Christ. Hence in the Revelations, "the mystical Babylon is said to be the habitation of every foul spirit," Rev. xviii. 2. because the great corrupters of the christian doctrine dwelt in her. For the same reason they are called "spirits of devils," Rev. xvi. 14. By St. John, "the spirit of error is opposed to the spirit of truth," 1 John iv. 6. "and he commands us to try the spirits," verse 1. St. Paul to Timothy calls them "seducing spirits," 1 Tim. iv. 1. So that these spiritual wickednesses, or, as the Syriac version reads it, "these wicked spirits," are men acting by a wicked, deceitful, and corrupt spirit: and that we might not be ignorant what spirits he pointed at, the apostle, adds: "Spiritual wickednesses in heavenly things or places." It is remarkable that the word *ἐπεραιος* is never elsewhere used once in the New Testament, but in respect to some properly heavenly object; and therefore one would think it should naturally have the same meaning in the place before us. It is the character of God that he is our heavenly father. Our bodies at the resurrection are called heavenly bodies. Christ is said to be raised up to heavenly places; and, what is more directly to our purpose, the gospel state, the religion and doctrine of our blessed Saviour are expressly denoted by *τα ἐπεραια* heavenly things. "If I have told you earthly things,

" and

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness.

Stand therefore firmly, as men prepared for the battle, without any thing to encumber or hinder you; girt about with a sincere and undissembled love to truth, like soldiers girt about the loins with their military belt, that their garments may be no impediment to their exerting themselves with proper agility and vigour. Clothe yourselves also with that righteousness, with that sincerity and integrity, with those

15 And

“and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” John iii. 12. And the author to the Hebrews tells us, ‘that the priests under the law served unto the example of ‘heavenly things.’ In like manner, in the place before us, these spiritual wickednesses in heavenly things were evil and corrupt men in the christian church, who endeavoured to pervert and seduce men from the purity and simplicity of the heavenly doctrine of Christ’s gospel. So that the words may signify spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places, i. e. ‘in the kingdom of heaven,’ ‘in the gospel state or church;’ or else “spiritual wickednesses in heavenly things” may mean, ‘wickednesses that exerted themselves, and levelled their aims and endeavours against the heavenly doctrines of the everlasting gospel.’ And thus in the christian’s wrestling, he will have need of strength to maintain his ground against the power of persecuting and tyrannical oppressors, and of great art and skill to preserve himself from the feints and sleights of artful and designing impostors. Nor should I omit, under this article, that the apostle himself applies, in this very epistle, the word *μεθοδία*, which we render in the eleventh verse of this chapter, *wiles*, “the wiles of the devil, ‘to the arts made use of by such kind of impostors,’ Eph. iv. 14. ‘wherefore he exhorts his ‘Ephesians, not to be carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cogging or false play ‘of men, and their cunning craftiness, through the arts or deceit of error.’ I shall only add, that as the apostle mentions “these spiritual wickednesses in heavenly things,” in the last place; so also the last piece of the christian armour that he reckons up is, “the sword of the Spirit, which “is the word of God;” and I think I scarce need to observe, that the only weapon that can effectually preserve us against the endeavours of such wicked spirits, must be the word of the Spirit, or a strict adherence to the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of the word of God.

Ver. 14. This verse consists wholly of military terms. “Take the whole armour of God.” The armour the apostle refers to, was the heavy armour of the Romans, when they were to fight a pitched battle, in which they were apprehensive of a fierce resistance and great danger.

That ye may be able to withstand.] i. e. ‘to maintain your opposition against the assaults and force ‘of your enemies.’

And having done all to stand.] Many armies, after a stout resistance, at last give way, and yield the victory to their enemies. The christian must never fly from his post, or quit the field. *Having done all*; the word, as used in a military sense, signifies having acquitted ones self well; having managed the warfare with prudence, patience, courage, and resolution, and done every thing worthy a brave and experienced soldier, he must stand, viz. firm, and unmoved, without giving way to the shock, or yielding to the most vigorous and powerful opposition.

Ibid. Your loins girt about with truth.] The military belt was of known use amongst the ancients; and that it was worn about the loins, may be made appear from the best authorities*. Now the christian’s military belt is *truth*, in which the apostle alludes to the passage in Isaiah xi. 5. “faithfulness shall be the girdle of his reins.” By *truth*, seems to be meant here, either veracity, the love of truth, or strict fidelity and constancy, which agrees well with the nature of a belt, which was to bind and strengthen the loins, and by tying up the flowing garments to keep the soldier disincumbered, expedite and fit for action. Such is veracity, the constant love and pursuit of truth, in his whole conduct and behaviour, to a christian. It keeps his mind free and ready, and disengages him from every incumbrance of error and deceit.

The breast-plate of righteousness.] The breast-plate was to guard the breast from danger; and the apostle well compares righteousness, i. e. ‘integrity of heart and life, in disposition and practice, ‘towards God and man,’ to a breast-plate; because this preserves the heart and conscience free from danger, from every wound and injury, that may give pain to the mind, or endanger the christian’s life or happiness.

* Baltheus effulgens lumbos præstrinxit.

15 *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*

16 *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

17 *And*

those fixed habits of virtue and piety, which will prove to you a breast-plate of safety and defence, and preserve your consciences free from every violation and injury.

And cultivate that peaceable disposition, that love of peace towards all men, which the gospel recommends and enjoins, which will secure you against injuries, by rendering you prompt and ready to all offices of friendship and kindness: like soldiers, who are fit for marching, when their legs are harnessed, to prevent their receiving any injuries from the roughness and difficulties of the way.

Especially be careful to live in the exercise of a constant vigorous faith in God, by which you will be enabled to resist the force, and destroy the influence of the most powerful and dangerous temptations, arising from the severest persecutions, which evil men, under the influence of the devil, may excite against you: Even as the soldier secures himself,

15. *Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*] The *Ocrea*, or greaves for the legs and feet, which were made of gold, silver, brass, or iron, was a known part of the antient armour. The use of it was to preserve the legs and feet from the roughness of the way, or from the stroke of falling arrows, or from the edge of the sword. Now to these greaves the apostle compares the preparation of the gospel of peace. The word, which we translate *preparation*, signifies promptness, activity, or readiness. Thus the apostle exhorts Titus "to put the Cretans in mind to be ready to every good work," Tit. iii. 1. And of himself he declares, "I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And the expression which the apostle makes use of in the place before us, "having your feet shod," denotes the same readiness of mind; "to be shod" signifying the same as "to be prepared and ready." Thus the Israelites were commanded to eat the passover "shod," i. e. 'prepared for their march:' "having your feet shod," therefore, "with the readiness or activity of the gospel peace," seems to denote, 'being always prepared by that benevolent, peaceful spirit, that disposition, and love of peace, good-will, and charity, required by the gospel; which will render persons ever ready for, and chearful in, every kind and friendly office, and which will be one of the best securities any one can have against the injuries of persecution: since this hath a natural tendency to preserve persons from the malice and rage even of wicked men. Or else the "readiness of the gospel of peace" may signify 'that readiness to suffer for Christ, and chearful patience under afflictions upon his account, which the gospel, that proclaims peace from God with men, is so well calculated to inspire, and which will secure christians unhurt under the severest persecutions.'

Ver. 16. *The shield of faith.*] The shields of the ancient soldiers were so long, as that, with a small bending of the body, they were able to cover the whole of it. To this the apostle compares faith, viz. a steady belief in God, and in the great promises of salvation contained in the gospel of Christ. For the use of the shield was to preserve the body from arrows; and the apostle here expressly mentions fiery darts or arrows. For it was customary, amongst the ancients*, to make small firebrands, in the form of arrows, composed of pitch, tarr, and brimstone, which they shot either into towns to set them on fire, or amongst their enemies, to disorder and annoy them. These the soldiers used to receive on their shields, which were covered with brass or iron, whereby these arrows were broken and destroyed, and the combustible matter of which they were composed easily extinguished, and prevented from doing any harm. In like manner the faith of a christian will extinguish all the terrors of persecution, and preserve him unhurt amidst the severest of them.

* Emila Gad. Easwil, not. p. 1601.

himself by his shield from the enemy's darts, destroys the effect, and wholly extinguishes those fiery arrows that are thrown against him.

17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.* Cherish also, and maintain in your breasts the cheerful well-grounded hope of that eternal salvation, which is the gift of God by Jesus Christ; which, like an helmet to the head, will preserve you safe in the midst of danger: and let the great principles, precepts, and promises of the word of God, ever be present with you, which is that spiritual sword, which will effectually defend you, and secure you a passage, through all opposition, to certain victory, and compleat salvation.

18 *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.* Pray also with fervent minds, according to the impressions of the Spirit on your hearts, to the God of all grace, upon all occasions, for the grant of all blessings that you need, and for the preventing of every evil that you fear. And as soldiers keep watch and ward, to prevent the enemy's surprise, and give notice of danger, do you with constancy and perseverance be on your guard, and watchful to secure yourselves from harm, by supplication to God for yourselves, and intercessions with him, in behalf of all your fellow-christians.

19 *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel:* And let me also be remembered in your prayers to God, that I may be delivered from my present confinement, so that I may have liberty and opportunity, to preach publicly and without hinderance, the truths of Christ, and to make known to those

20 *For* Gentiles

Ver. 17. *And take the helmet of salvation.*] i. e. as the apostle expresses it, 1 Th. v. 1. "an helmet, the hope of salvation." The helmet was for the defence of the head, to preserve it from deadly blows. And in like manner the hope of salvation, built on the promises of God, and arising from the consciousness of integrity, will ward off, or preserve from the fatal effects of all temptations, from worldly terrors, and evils, so that they shall not disorder the imagination, or pervert the judgment, or cause men to desert the path of duty, to their final destruction.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.] i. e. 'the spiritual sword of God's word,' the knowledge of which not only separates them from evil affections, but teaches them to discern between truth and falsehood; guards the christian from the entrance of corrupt and destructive doctrines, and destroys the influence and force of the most artful and delusive errors.

Ver. 18. The two words rendered *prayer* and *supplication*, seem naturally to denote the asking 'of what is good,' and 'the deprecating what is evil,' from their two roots; the first of which signifies, *wishing*, and the latter, *fearing*. And this they were to do *in the spirit*, i. e. 'either with their heart and mind, sincerely and fervently; or according as the Spirit of God should excite and move them.'

And to this they were to watch with all perseverance.] The apostle here continues the use of military terms, relating to the fatigues of soldiers, who were oftentimes under arms during the whole night, and inured to long and laborious watchings; or rather to the centinels and guards of an army, who were to watch in their posts during the nights, to prevent surprize, and give notice of danger. Thus christians were to watch and pray, with persevering diligence, for their own safety, and the common benefit of the christian church.

Gentiles his gospel, to whom it is yet mysterious and unrevealed :

20 *For which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.* Even that gospel, which I am commissioned from God himself to teach, and for the sake of which I now wear a chain. Pray for me therefore, that being delivered, I may preach it openly and freely, both according to my inclination and duty.

21 *But that ye may also know my affairs, and how I do, Tychichus a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things.* But that you may have a more perfect account of the state of my affairs, and what I am now doing, Tychichus, a Christian brother, very dear to me, and a faithful servant and assistant to me in the work of the gospel, shall give you the full information that you desire.

22 *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.* For this reason I have sent him to you, that you may understand from him my present circumstances and condition; and that by satisfying you of my courage and constancy in my bonds and imprisonment, he might comfort and establish your hearts.

23 *Peace be to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* I wish all the brethren amongst you entire prosperity, and in order to this, that mutual affection towards each other, that sure interest in the divine love, and that encreasing love towards God, which is the effect of your believing and obeying the gospel: I say I wish you these blessings from God the Father, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the Father is pleased to bestow them.

24 *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.* Yea, may the favour and blessing of almighty God, be with all those, without exception, wherever they are, who love our Lord Jesus Christ with pure and uncorrupt affection, and manifest this their love to him, by their steady perseverance in the faith and profession of his gospel. Amen.

This Epistle was written from Rome, and sent to the Ephesians by Tychichus.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

A
COMMENTARY AND NOTES
ON
The FIRST EPISTLE of St. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

COMMENTARY AND NOTES

ON

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

THESSALONIANS

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

COMMENTARY AND NOTES

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE of St. PAUL to the THESSALONIANS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

ST. Paul, from a violent persecutor of the disciples of Christ, became not only a convert to his religion, but a most eminent preacher and apostle of it, being separated by the holy Ghost to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and having been called to this peculiar service, he laboured more abundantly in it than the other apostles, travelling from city to city, and preaching repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

After he had travelled through several places with Silas his fellow-labourer, they came to Thessalonica, which was the chief city of Macedonia, built by Philip king of Macedon, after his conquest of Thessaly. In this city (now called Salonichi, and in possession of the Turks) there was a synagogue of the Jews, where St. Paul according to his custom went and preached; and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alledging that Messiah must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that Jesus, whom he preached, was that Messiah. The effect of this was, that some of the Jews believed, and a great multitude of the Greeks, who were profelytes of the gate and devout, and of the chief women not a few.

Being forced to depart from this city, by the unbelieving Jews, who raised a sedition against him, Paul and Silas came to Berea, from whence Paul was soon driven by the influence and envy of the Jews, and conducted by the brethren to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy at Berea, with a command to come to him at

Athens with all speed; which, in all probability, they quickly did; but the apostle being greatly concerned for the continuance of the Thessalonians in the faith of the gospel, sends to them from Athens Silas and Timothy, 1 Thes. iii. 1, 2. Acts xviii. 5. to enquire concerning their faith, to establish them in it, and to comfort them under the afflictions and persecutions they suffered for it. During this journey of Silas and Timothy, St. Paul went to Corinth, Acts xviii. 1. where he had good tidings brought him from Thessalonica, concerning the faith and charity of the new converts; Silas and Timothy assuring him, that they had a grateful remembrance of him, and were highly desirous of seeing him, 1 Thes. iii. 6. but as the apostle was prevented from gratifying his own and their desire in this respect, to supply the want of his personal presence, he sent them this first epistle, from Corinth, where Silas and Timothy met him upon their return from Thessalonica, and not from Athens as is declared in the common subscription of this epistle.

This letter was written about the year of our Lord fifty-two, or about nineteen years after the death of Christ, and about eight years after St. Paul's being solemnly set apart to the office of an apostle; and is the first letter that he wrote to any who were converted by his ministry.

The principal design of the apostle in it is, to commend them for their adherence to their christian profession, and to exhort them to perseverance under their sufferings on account of it; after which he concludes with exhortations to piety and virtue, and a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. *Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*.*

The apostle here joins with himself in this salutation, Silvanus and Timothy. Of Timothy he speaks in this epistle "as his brother, and a minister of God, and a fellow-labourer with him in the gospel of Christ," chap. iii. ver. 2. As to Silvanus, he is undoubtedly the same person who is called Silas in the Acts, whom Paul chose for his companion after his difference with, and separation from, Barnabas, Acts xv. 40. And the apostle joins these two with himself in the salutation, as friends that were well known to the Thessalonian church, and who had an hearty concern for their welfare, not as persons of equal authority: for in this epistle he, maintaining his own superior character, tells them; 'that Timothy was sent to them by his order,' chap. iii. ver. 2; speaks of the 'commandment he gave them by the Lord Jesus,' chap. iv. ver. 2; and 'charges them by the Lord that his epistle should be read to all the brethren,' chap. v. ver. 27; keeping up hereby the dignity of his apostolical character, at the same time that he joins Timothy and Silas with him in the same general salutation.

* Some copies have only *χαρις υμιν και ειρηνη*, "grace and peace be to you," and leave out entirely the following words, "from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The apostle having saluted the Thessalonians with that kind and friendly benediction, *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*; proceeds in the same affectionate manner:

TEXT.

COMMENTARY.

Ver. 2, 3. *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*

As they had been converted by his ministry; and as he had been driven from them, soon after their conversion, by a furious persecution; he assures them he was not unmindful of them, though absent from them, but continually thankful to God upon their account, and always making mention of them in his prayers; thankful, that God by him had brought them to the acknowledgment of the truth, and praying for them, that God would confirm and establish them in it. And what peculiarly endeared them to him, and made it impossible for him ever to forget them, was their *work of faith*, their *labour of love*, and their *patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before God and our Father.*

Your work of faith.] The old translation renders it, *Your effectual faith*, i. e. 'which either was genuine and sincere, the fruit of the most abundant conviction; or which was active, and so influenced their minds, as to produce its proper, natural effects;' and this latter I think is the true meaning. *The work of faith*, is that work, which faith accomplished, or of which faith was the cause, viz. as the apostle tells us, ver. 9. "their conversion from idolatry, to serve the living and true God," which was the immediate effect or work of their embracing and believing the gospel. In this sense we have *εργον πισews*, the work of faith, 2 Thess. i. 11. for 'that work which is the effect of faith;' and upon this account it is called *πισις ενεργουμενη*, faith that works, or operates, by love, Gal. v. 6.

To this they added, *labour of love.*] The old translation here renders it, *diligent love*; but this is not, I think, quite expressive enough. The original word *κοπος*, which we render *labour*, frequently signifies, *difficulties* and *troubles*; and the apostle means, "those difficulties, and afflictions, and dangers, to which either their love of Christianity, or their peculiar affection to the apostle, exposed them;" referring to what he expressly mentions, (ver. 6.) *they received the word in much affliction*; and were so careful of the apostle's person, that they sent him away by night to Berea, (Acts xvii. 10.) to preserve him from the malice of his enemies. And finally, he constantly remembered

Their *patience of the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ, before their God and Father.* For thus the words run, if literally translated, *Your patience of the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father*, i. e. as the apostle expresses it, (ver. 10.) *their waiting for the Son of God from heaven*; or living in the believing, patient expectation of the second appearance of Christ to judgment, as their grand support under the persecutions that befel them, upon account of their christian faith and profession.

When the apostle adds, *before, or, in the presence of their God and Father**, I see no manner of reason to imagine that he means it †, as an appeal to God, for

* These words are not in the Syriac or Arabic versions.

† Benf. in Loc.

the truth of what he says; for the plain connection of the words is with the beginning of the verse, and they should be joined with it in this manner; *Remembering without ceasing, before our God and Father, your effectual faith, your laborious painful love, and your patient hope or expectation of the Lord Jesus Christ*; in which view the words create no difficulty, and have a very proper and significant meaning. He remembered these things before God, thankful to him, that they were wrought in them, and earnestly praying to him, that he would continue and establish them. Or if they refer to the Thessalonians, the meaning will be, 'that their faith was effectual, their love such as stood approved by the greatest difficulties, and their expectation of Christ patient, *before God*, or because they considered God as present with them and beholding them, and believed in him as their final bountiful rewarder.'

Having thus assured them of his constant and affectionate remembrance of them, he puts them in mind of the great confirmation of the gospel doctrine which they received, and of the abundant reason they had to assure themselves of their being chosen, equally with the Jews themselves, to be the church and people of God.

T E X T.

Ver. 4, 5. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were amongst you for your sake.*

holy Spirit in his miraculous gifts, even to the idolatrous Gentiles, immediately upon their believing in Christ. And as these Thessalonians had received these gifts, the apostle speaks of it as of an affair of the utmost certainty: *We know, beloved brethren, your election of God*; or, as the words may be more naturally rendered, *Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election*. Thus he styles them in another place, 2 Thess. ii. 13. *Brethren, beloved of the Lord*.

The *election* spoken of is evidently their election to be the church and people of God, to all the privileges and advantages, and means of salvation by Christ, and to eternal life and blessedness, as the great end of their faith. The great question in these early days was, not about any particular secret choice of persons, unconditionally and absolutely, to eternal life: this controversy the primitive church knew nothing of; the debate was of another nature, and precisely this, Whether circumcision and the observation of the law of Moses, as well as faith in Christ, were necessary to render the Gentiles equally partakers of the privileges of the kingdom or church of God, with the Jews themselves: This the Jews pleaded and persecuted for, and the apostle Paul as strenuously and constantly denied; affirming, that faith in Christ was the only thing necessary to constitute them the children

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Knowing, must be referred to the apostle and his fellow-labourers: *We remember you without ceasing before God, as knowing your election*. The election of the Gentiles to be the church and people of God, by their believing in Christ, without circumcision, and submission to the law of Moses, was that mystery, of which former ages had been intirely ignorant. This important event had been fully revealed to the apostle, and God himself gave the most abundant proof of the truth of this doctrine, by giving the

children of God; for that God had chosen them to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body with the Jews, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.

And this doctrine which the apostle preached to the Thessalonians, he gave them the fullest evidence of: *Our gospel*, says he, *came not to you in word only*. *Our gospel*: not, as some of the ancients imagined, the gospel of Luke, who was St. Paul's companion, and wrote his gospel by Paul's order, and under his inspection; but *our gospel* means, that doctrine, or good news, which I Paul and Silvanus taught you, viz. of your justification and acceptance with God by faith alone, without any conformity to the law of Moses.

This our gospel was not *in word only*: if we did only and barely affirm it, then might our enemies the Jews have reproached and denied it: but it was *in power*; we confirmed it by miraculous works, and in the holy Ghost; we conferred on you the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, as the sure evidence of your being made the children of God: and *in much assurance*; the original word πληροφορια, signifies either the fullest or most *perfect persuasion**, or else *abundant confirmation*; and either of these senses agrees to the place: the gospel came to them attended with those miraculous works, and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which gave them the most abundant conviction of the truth of it, or was the most satisfying and demonstrative confirmation of it. Join both the senses, and you have the full import of the word, and the true meaning of the apostle †.

And that the gospel came to them attended with this evidence, and was productive of this full persuasion; the apostle appeals to themselves, *As you know what manner of men we were amongst you for your sake*, i. e. you yourselves know that your conversion to Christ, and being made partakers of the gospel salvation, was the great thing we aimed at, and endeavoured; and that, when we assured you of your acceptance with God, and being made heirs of the grace of life, we conferred on you the gifts of the Spirit, and did those miraculous works amongst you, which were abundant evidence that our gospel was true; and that we lived and conversed amongst you, with a purity and holiness becoming the doctrines which we taught. These are facts, and to you we appeal as witnesses of them.

Having thus put them in mind of the evidence and confirmation of his gospel, he next speaks with commendation of their cheerfully embracing the doctrines of the gospel, and their becoming examples to many other cities and countries round about them.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 6, 7, 8. *And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, receiving the word in much affliction and joy* *the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy* *ye became followers.*] μιμηται 'imitators' of us, and of the Lord, receiving the word in much affliction and joy of the holy Ghost, i. e. 'that word the preachers of which were grievously persecuted, or for receiving which

* Hesych. πληροφορια. βεβαιωσις.

† The word πληροφορια signifies the full motion of a ship with all her sails; and in allusion to this, it signifies the full and entire conviction of the mind as to the truth of Christianity; into which it was carried by the evident testimony of the Spirit of God, in those extraordinary gifts which were conferred on persons who embraced the gospel.

joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia: For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing.

which you suffered great affliction.* They had no sooner received the word, (Acts xvii.) i. e. embraced the gospel, but their own idolatrous unbelieving countrymen severely persecuted and injuriously used them. In this manner the Jews treated the apostle; and before him, his great Lord and Master: So that the Thessalonians were followers or imitators of the apostle, and not of him only, but of Christ, as they were sufferers for truth together with them, and voluntarily and cheerfully endured those sufferings; for they received the word not only *with much affliction*, but with joy of the Holy Ghost. The pleasure and satisfaction they received, from the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which were conferred on them, whereby their election to be the people of God, was abundantly certified, made them joyful under all the afflictions that befel them. I shall only add, that instead of, *Ye became followers of us and of the Lord*, one copy leaves out the particle AND, and reads the whole verse in this manner, *Ye became followers of us, having received the word of the Lord in much affliction*.

And so remarkable were they for these gifts of the Spirit, and for the patience and joy with which they suffered persecution for the sake of Christ, that they were ensamples, *τυπαι*, types, or patterns to all the Christian converts throughout the whole province of Macedonia, of which their city was one of the chief, and the neighbouring province of Achaia or Greece. For,

From you, says the apostle, *sounded out the word of the Lord, in Macedonia and Achaia*. The *sounding out* the word of the Lord means*, not its being first preached at, and then propagated from, Thessalonica throughout Macedonia, as hath been injudiciously remarked; for it was first preached at Philippi, a city also of Macedonia, and from thence propagated to Thessalonica: but the word *sounded out* from Thessalonica, as the effects and confirmation of it, and the faith and patience of those who received it there, were extremely remarkable†, and spoken of by many with honour and amazement, in all other parts of Macedonia and Achaia.

And not only so, but also *in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing*, i. e. your conversion to the knowledge and worship of the true God, and your patience under your persecutions, is so universally known, and spread abroad throughout so many cities and countries, that we need speak nothing, either of the means of your conversion, or of the wonderful effects and success of our preaching.

TEXT.

Ver. 9, 10. For they themselves shew of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living

COMMENTARY.

They themselves, i. e. those of Macedonia and Achaia, and other places, who know of your conversion, they shew of us, *απαγγελλουσιν*, publish and declare concerning us to others, *what manner of entering in we had ‡ unto you*, i. e. in what manner, and

* Benson, ver. 8.

† Theoph. in Loc.

‡ *Εχομεν*, "We have." Some copies read *εσχομεν*, "We had;" which is the true sense.

living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.

and with what evidence we preached the gospel to you, when we first came amongst you; and *how notwithstanding your persecutions, you turned to God, to the acknowledgment, service, and worship of the one only living and true God, from the adoration of idols; the Thessalonians having been bred up in all the superstitions and impieties of idolatry: and as the apostle preached not only the doctrine of one God, but also of one Lord and Mediator; so another effect of his preaching was, their being brought to the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, viz. to the belief that God raised him from the dead; and to wait for, i. e. to the patient and believing expectation of his second appearance from heaven**; *πουσμενον, who delivers us even now from the wrath to come, by bringing us into the way, and giving us the means of salvation: or, as some copies read, πουσμενον, 'who shall hereafter save us from that wrath that shall finally come, 'upon all who do not believe nor obey the gospel;'* for this is that deliverance or salvation of which the apostle speaks, even a deliverance from that vengeance, which he will hereafter take on all impenitent and irreclaimable sinners.

Having thus explained the chapter, let us now consider what practical improvements may be made of it.

The several DOCTRINES contained in it are these, particularly

1. That there is one only *living and true God*, ver. 9. *Ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God*: He is called *the living God*, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, who are absolutely destitute of life; and the *true God*, in opposition to those fictitious deities, who, though they do live, or have formerly lived, yet are not and cannot be really and truly gods. It is also evident, that these characters of the *living and true God*, are here peculiarly appropriated to the Father, who, by way of eminence, is called in scripture, *the only true God*, and is in this place distinguished from the Son. *Ye turned to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven*, ver. 9, 10. where *the living and true God*, and *his Son*, are spoken of as two distinct persons or beings.

2. Another doctrine evidently taught in this portion of scripture is, That the Lord Jesus Christ is *the Son of God*: *To wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus*, ver. 10. This is the distinguishing character in which you are to consider him, *the Son of God*; so called, as *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*; as the *first-begotten of God*, begotten before all ages; as being *conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost*, and the over-shadowing of the Highest; as being *raised from the dead*, and restored to an endless life; and finally, as advanced to an eternal, heavenly kingdom.

3. The death of Christ is here intimated, and the doctrine of his resurrection from the dead is plainly asserted, ver. 10. inclusive of his exaltation to the right hand of power and glory.

4. The doctrine of Christ's second appearance is expressly taught: This was one principal article of the faith of the primitive christians, that Christ should come from heaven, as the angels declared to the disciples at Christ's ascension: *This*

* Τοι πουσμενον. Vid. Epigr. 1. 3. p. 416. Ep. 15.

same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven, Acts i. 11.

5. That the great ends of Christ's second appearance or coming from heaven, shall be to execute vengeance on them that *know not God, and obey not the gospel*, and to *deliver his people from this wrath to come*, ver. 10. The *wrath to come*, is that final destruction, which shall hereafter proceed from *the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*, for the punishment of ungodly sinners; from which future destruction he will intirely deliver those who are converted to God, and wait for Christ's appearance, when *he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired by all them that believe*.

6. The christian church is the multitude or intire number of those, who continue in the faith of one God the Father, serving him as the only living and true God; and in the belief of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, raised from the dead, and exalted to his Father's right-hand, in heaven; expecting that he shall come from thence again to the final salvation of his people, and the utter destruction of his enemies.

7. The doctrine of election is here expressly taught, not an unconditional election of particular persons by a secret decree of God, which no one could know without a particular revelation; but an external visible election of the idolatrous Gentiles to the privileges of the christian church, and means of salvation: which had these two sure and infallible proofs of it, their faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and their participation of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; so that their election was as certain as their faith was genuine, and as the Holy Ghost in his gifts and effects was real and visible, ver. 4, 5, 9, 10.

8. Another doctrine or truth taught in this passage is, ver. 9, 10. That the great end and design of the gospel doctrine is, to turn sinners from their idols, to the knowledge and service of the true God, in expectation of Christ's second coming from heaven; and that where these ends are truly answered, such persons may assure themselves, that Christ will come to deliver them from the wrath to come.

9. Lastly, that this conversion of sinners to God and his service is voluntary, and the act of sinners themselves: The apostle bears the Thessalonians witness, *Επιστρέψετε sci. εαυτους*; *Ye turned, viz. yourselves, to God from idols*. They willingly forsook their idolatry, and readily devoted themselves to the service of God; and yet this conversion was as really and truly the work of God, because owing to the preaching and illumination of his word, as those miracles and gifts of the holy Ghost, with which the truth of it was demonstrated. — Besides these doctrines, we farther have

These following CHARACTERS and DUTIES of Christians represented to us, particularly,

1. That their faith must be lively and active, and productive of a sincere conversion to God and Christ, ver. 3. That

2. Their love to God and Christ must be steady and constant, whatever labours, difficulties, and persecutions, they may be exposed to on these accounts, ver. 3. That

3. Their expectation and hope of the second coming of Christ from heaven, must be with continued and unwearied patience, ver. 3. 10.

4. That

4. That whenever we approach the presence of God, we should not confine our prayers and thanksgivings to ourselves, but constantly and without ceasing kindly remember others; praising God for all that is excellent and valuable in them, and for the graces that adorn them; and praying that God would continue and encrease them. And this is particularly the duty of ministers with respect to their people, who cannot but be pleased and thankful to God, to see them grow in faith, and love, and hope, the three capital graces of the christian character, and pray, that God would cherish, cultivate, and improve them, ver. 2, 3.

5. That the only sure, infallible mark of election, is a living, operative faith, a love of God and Christ, which no difficulties can cool, and a believing expectation of Christ's second appearance, ver. 3, 4.

6. That the word of God, and the doctrine of salvation, must be adhered to, whatever persecutions we may endure on account of them, ver. 6.

7. That resolution, and fortitude, under sufferings for righteousness sake, is the noblest imitation of, and conformity to Christ; and that this is matter of comfort to persecuted Christians, ver. 6.

8. That the service of the one living and true God, is the great and comprehensive duty and character of a Christian, ver. 9. And

Lastly, That as Christians we are to live in the patient expectation of Christ's second coming; frequently to think of this important event, and to encourage our hearts with the hope of it: as being that glorious and blessed season, when the triumphs of sin shall for ever cease, when all our afflictions and sorrows shall come to a perpetual end, when we shall be put into possession of all our hopes, be for ever delivered from the fears of *the wrath to come*, and have our salvation fully perfected, in the presence and kingdom of God.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapter put the Thessalonians in mind of those miraculous works, and that extraordinary testimony of the Holy Ghost, by which he brought them to the reception and belief of Christianity; and having appealed to many persons in Macedonia, Achaia, and other places, who had been witnesses of these things, and voluntarily declared the manner of his first coming amongst them; proceeds in this chapter to appeal more largely to the Thessalonians themselves, concerning the manner of his own behaviour amongst them, both with respect to the unblamableness of his conduct, and the purity of his doctrine.

T E X T.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. *For you yourselves know, brethren, our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word *κενος* which we render *vain*, hath a double signification; it denotes either *fruitless*, and of none effect, (*Κενεαν δ'ελπιδων χαυνον τελος*. Pind. Nem. viii. ver. 77, 78. *Vanæ spei inanis exitus*.) or else, *deceitful and lying*, in opposition to truth, sincerity, and honesty: thus, *Let no man deceive you by philosophy, and vain*, i. e. "lying," *deceit*, Col. ii. 8. and again, *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*, 1 Cor. xv. 11. i. e. as the apostle explains himself, *we are found false witnesses*, verse 15. 'we preach lies, and your faith is false and groundless.' And the meaning of the apostle seems to be; that, when he

came amongst the Thessalonians, *his labours were not fruitless*, and ineffectual; but that he gained great numbers of converts amongst them; and thus it agrees and connects well with the last verses of the foregoing chapter, where he speaks of their being converted from idolatry to *the service of the living and true God*: or else he means, that his coming amongst them was not vain, i. e. 'he did not *preach* to them a *false doctrine*, in order by deceiving them to promote his own private interest and advantage; and thus it connects exactly with what follows in the next verse, because his sufferings for the doctrine he taught, were the most substantial evidence that could be given of his own full persuasion of the truth and excellency of it: for says he;

T E X T.

Ver. 2. *But even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

By his *sufferings before at Philippi*, he means the unjust and cruel treatment he and Sylvanus met with in that city, where they were severely beaten with rods, Acts xvi. 22. thrown into jail, and their feet were fastened in the stocks, 23, 24. This was using them with great indignity and severity, putting them to open shame, and treating them in that reproachful manner, which was the punishment due to the most infamous criminals. There was a particular * law at Rome, [called *Lex Porcia*, as being made by *Porcius Cato*,] to exempt every roman citizen from the punishment of being beaten with rods; and *Cicero* the roman Orator, in his pleadings against *Verres*, speaks several times with the utmost indignation of his cruelty in this respect, in frequently making the citizens of Rome suffer this severe and infamous punishment †. And as the apostle was a roman citizen, it was with the highest reason he complains of this treatment at Philippi, as of a very injurious and shameful punishment; and accounts for the boldness of his language to the magistrates of that place, who had *acted illegally* in thus ordering him to be beaten: *They have*, says the apostle, *beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison: and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out*, Acts xvii. 37.

However, though he knew how, and when to assert his privilege as a citizen of Rome, and properly to resent the indignity that was offered him; yet did not his resentment of what he had suffered, nor his fears of the same treatment in other places, in the least abate his courage, or cool his zeal in the service of his blessed master: *We were bold in God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

The original word *παρρησιασαμεθα*, which we render, *were bold*, signifies sometimes to *speak with courage*, and void of fear; sometimes to *speak openly* and plainly, without ambiguity and disguise; sometimes to *speak in the most public manner* before others; and sometimes to *speak with full persuasion* and confidence of encouragement and support; instances of all which may be found in the New Testament, and the word here seems to take in all these kindred senses, and the history will justify us in this large acceptation. For when St. Paul came to Thessalo-

* Vid. Cicer. Orat. pro C. Rabir. p. 565, 566. *An de civibus Romanis contra legem Porciam verberatis, aut necatis plura dicenda sunt?*

† Vid. Cicer. in Ver. l. 1. p. 529 et l. 2. p. 641.

nica, he went into the synagogue of the Jews, and reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Acts xvii. 1. 2. This was speaking in the most public manner, and with a courage, fearless of danger. And he opened and alledged that Christ must needs suffer, and rise from the dead, and that Jesus, whom he preached, was the Christ, Acts xvii. 2. This was speaking plainly, so that none could mistake him. And in the passage before us, he tells us he was bold in God, i. e. he had such a firm assurance of and trust in the protection and support of God, that no sufferings past, nor prospect of afflictions to come, could deter him from preaching the gospel amongst them also at Thessalonica.

And what gave him this boldness of speech, and this noble courage and confidence in God, was, that he preached the gospel of God; that good news of salvation by Christ, which God had sent to mankind. He knew he was sent on God's errand, and to deliver his message to the world. This armed him with an invincible courage such as no persecutions could subdue: this was the foundation of that confidence in God, which no sufferings could ever shake. The repetition of the word God in so short a sentence, *We were bold in God to preach the gospel of God*, may seem at first view unnecessary: but it is truly emphatical, and with the highest elegance and propriety.

And what raises the character of this apostle is, that he preached the gospel of God in much contention. *Εν πολλῳ ἀγωνί*, the word signifies, either great contention and opposition, with which the ancient games were always attended; or great hazard and imminent danger. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, Phil. i. 30. i. e. 'being actually exposed to the same sufferings; or, being in the same circumstances of difficulty and danger.' And the history justifies each of these senses, Acts xvii. 10. For the Jews not only opposed him at Thessalonica, but raised such a tumult in the city against him, as forced the disciples to send him away privately by night, for fear of the consequences.

Having thus put them in mind of the circumstances of his first entrance amongst them, he proceeds to show how unreasonable this opposition was to his person and doctrine.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 3, 4. *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God.*

The apostle in these words, as also in the fifth and sixth verses, plainly refers to certain teachers, who were chargeable with these immoral views and practices. Some expositors* think he means the erroneous and wicked teachers amongst the Jews: but I apprehend the contrary; because the Thessalonian converts were mostly, if not altogether originally Heathens; as appears from chap. i. ver. 9. where speaking of the effect of his ministry, he tells them, *ye turned to God from idols*; thereby plainly declaring them to have been, antecedent to their conversion, idolators; and therefore we cannot suppose them to have been much acquainted, or conversant with the Jewish teachers: but principally, because these words are the plainest description that can be, of the generality of the heathen philosophers, who were chargeable with every one of the corrupt and mean practices, that the apostle disclaims.

* Benson.

Particularly he declares, *our exhortation*, i. e. ‘the doctrines we exhorted you to believe, the admonitions we gave you, were not *of deceit*, εκ πλάνης, did not proceed from imposture, or a design and endeavour to seduce and deceive you. Now the heathen philosophers were remarkable on this account, and were the *veriest impostors* and cheats of all men. Lucian, who lived not long after the apostles, and perfectly knew the tempers and manners of the philosophers of his times *, frequently styles them γοητες, *impostors*, and says that they were τερατειας μεσοι, *full of lying tricks* †, and that *imposture went before them; and impudence always accompanied them*.

Again, the apostle declares, that his exhortation was not *of uncleanness* εκ ακαρθασιας, did not arise from any impure affections, nor was calculated to promote and accomplish any of these vile and infamous purposes. Now herein the heathen philosophers were, as Lucian frequently declares, infamously criminal ‡. Some of them taught, that the study of pleasure was the principal study και ττο ειναι το ευδαιμον and that *this was the only happiness*. Others who condemned pleasure ||, ιδια δε μονον ταυτη προσηρτημενης were *in private intirely devoted to it*. They frequented *the public stews*, and raised disturbances in them §, and finally they were guilty of *the most unnatural and criminal lusts* **.

Farther, the apostle appeals to them, that his exhortation was not *in guile*; εν δολω: it had no mixture of deceit; it was not artfully contrived and intended to carry on any base and sinister ends whatsoever; he had no fraudulent views to accomplish. But Lucian severely reproaches the philosophers of his times, with the most deceitful methods, and with being the most perfect hypocrites in nature: for whilst they put on the external appearances of gravity and wisdom, they were in practice the very reverse ††, and *the impudence of their hypocrisy was intolerable* ††. He informs us that they frequently taught |||, “that riches and “glory were to be despised, and that virtue only was the solid good; yet they “thirsted after riches themselves, and in order to draw them out of others, gravely “preached the necessity of liberality, and the indifference of riches, and that gold “and silver were no better than the very pebbles on the sea shore!” It appears from these accounts, and many others of like nature which might be mentioned, that these pretended philosophers were a compound of imposture, impurity, and deceit, and guilty of the very vices which the apostle here disclaims §§.

As *he was allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so he spoke*. The original word δεδοκιμασμεθα, hath a stronger signification than that of mere *allowance*, and denotes fully *to approve*. Thus the Heathens are said, Rom. i. 28. *not to like, not to approve of the retaining God in their knowledge*. And he elsewhere tells

* Dial. Mort. p. 280.

† η γοητεια προηγεται, και η αναισχυντια παρομαρτει. Id. Tim. p. 162, 163.

‡ Necyomant. p. 327.

|| Ibid. p. 328.

§ Cave de hoc loco. προς τοις χαμαιτυπειοις μαχομενων. Id. Nigrin. p. 33.

** τινι καινω νοσω παρανομησαντες επι την κατ’αλληλων υβριν ηρεθισθη. Id. Amoz. p. 890.

†† Revivis. p. 409.

‡‡ εκ ηνεγκα την αισχυνην υποκρισεως. Ibid.

||| Ibid. p. 409.

§§ Πολυς ο περι τε κοινωνικον ειναι δειν λογος, και ως αδιαφορον ο πλετος, η τι γαρ το χρυσιον, η ταργοριον, εδεν των εν τοις αιγιαλοις ψηφιδων διαφερον. Luc. Revivis, p. 410.

us, Rom. xiv. 22. *happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he allows, or approves as lawful and right.* So that the apostle's meaning is, "As God hath so far honoured us, as to approve and count us worthy to have the doctrine of the gospel revealed to us, and the preaching it to the Gentiles committed to our care, *even so we speak*, confine ourselves absolutely to the message we have received, and preach with this sole view, not of *pleasing men*, for any present advantage, *but God which tries the heart.*" The word is the same as before, and should be rendered, *who approveth our hearts*; who knows the simplicity of our views and approveth them.

And as the apostle could thus appeal to God, for the sincerity of his intentions, and strict adherence to the doctrine he had received, so he could to the *Thessalonians* themselves, for the uncorruptness of his behaviour, and the manner of his preaching.

TEXT.

COMMENTARY.

Ver. 5. *For neither at any time used we flattering words as you know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.*

In which words the apostle disclaims two vices, for which the philosophers and teachers of those times were infamous, viz. flattery and covetousness. The method of impostors and false teachers, is to insinuate themselves, and their corrupt doctrines into others, by flattering the vices and passions of those to whom they address themselves. By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the heart of the simple, Rom. xvi. 18. or, as the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 14. they use *sleight and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* This craft of flattery, the sure argument of a mean and corrupt mind, is one of the characteristics of some of the ancient philosophers. The forementioned author, Lucian *, severely taxes them with this iniquity: speaking of these hypocrites, 'How,' says he, 'do you imagine I am affected, when I see some of them that are very old, mixing themselves with a crowd of flatterers, and encompassing some person in place and honour like his body guard?' It is a reproach that he often throws on them, amongst other vices with which he charges them; but our apostle appeals to the *Thessalonians*, that this charge could never be thrown on him; *neither at any time used we flattering words*, *ατε γαρ ποτε εν λογω κολακειας εγεννηθημεν.* The words in the original, which are censured by some persons, as an Hebraism, or bad Greek †, are a very correct and emphatical manner of writing; and denote two things that have a near relation to each other; either to be ‡ *conversant in the word* of flattery, i. e. 'to use flattering speeches,' and, what is the general effect of such a mean practice, to be in § *the report* of flattery, or to be reported of as given to flattery. The apostle

* Lucian. Nig. p. 34. *οταν ιδω τετων τινα μαλιστα των προεσχηκοτων αναμεμιγμενον κολακων οκλω, &c.*

† Benson.

‡ Thus *εν εθει τινος γενεσθαι*, is 'to be accustomed to any thing.' Herod. Hist. l. 5. c. 5. § 12. *εν υπηρεσιας γενομενος*, is 'to be used to, and conversant in, offices.' Id. Herod. l. 1. c. 2. § 10.

§ *Λογος* frequently signifies, 'fame,' or, 'common report.' *Λογος δημωδης*, *Fama vulgaris*, *Æl. V. Hist. l. 3. c. 45. Λογος διαρρει και λεγει. Fama percrebuit et refert.* Id. l. 3. c. 35. *Εν λογοις ειραι*, *Hominum sermonibus celebrari.* Aristot. apud Rob. Constant.

denies both, either that he ever used flattery, or had the report, or so much as the insinuation of being given to it. And as those he wrote to at Thessalonica must be the persons he flattered there, if any, he appeals to them as his witnesses, that he never did; *you know*, we used not at any time flattering words: you neither heard me doing it, nor ever charged me with it.

But as the views of covetousness might lie deeper concealed, and be kept from their knowledge, he clears himself from this charge, not by appealing to them who were not competent judges in the case, but by a solemn appeal to God; neither used we a cloke of covetousness, *God is witness*. What propriety of sentiment is here! What apparent integrity! The word we render *cloke*, *προφασει*, denotes a *pretence*, or colour, to cover over, and more securely carry on any secret design; which our translation denotes by the figurative use of the word *cloke*. Now all kind of pretences to cover over an avaritious temper, the apostle disclaimed and abhorred; whereas the philosophers were notorious and infamous upon this account. Lucian* bitterly reproaches them on this head; he tells us, "they professed philosophy for the lucre of it, and set as it were "virtue to public sale in the market;" on which account he calls *their schools*, where they taught philosophy, *shops and taverns*: and says †, "That though they endeavoured to persuade others to despise riches, yet they "stuck close to them themselves, quarrelling about the interest of money teaching for hire, and submitting to every thing for the sake of riches ‡: that they were so extremely covetous, that, when an old and intimate friend needed their assistance, and asked their help, some little gift out of their abundance, then they recanted their former doctrine of the contempt of riches; and all their fine speeches about friendship, and virtue, and honesty, immediately fled away." Had such a spirit as this appeared in the apostle, it must have funk the dignity of his character, and given all thoughtful men the highest reason to have looked on him as an impostor and hypocrite: but in this his conduct was without tarnish and reproach. He adds:

T E X T.

Ver. 6, 7. *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burthensome, as the apostles of Christ; but we were gentle amongst you.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

For in order to maintain the connection, and to preserve the beauty and strength of the sentiment, which the pointing, and bad division of the verses in our translation, have quite spoiled; the former part of the seventh verse ought to be added to the end of the sixth: *We might have been burthensome as the apostles of Christ, but we were gentle amongst you.*

Some expositors think §, that the sentence, *When we might have been burthensome as the apostles of Christ*, is defective; and should be supplied with these words, *but were not so*: *We might have been burthensome, but were not so*. But no remark can be worse grounded. And the ob-

* Luc. Nigrin. p. 35. *μαλιστα δε εμεμνητο των επι μισθω φιλοσοφουντων, και την αρετην ωνιον ωσπερ εξ αγορας προτιθεντων. Εργασηρια γυν εκαλει και καπηλεια τας τυτων διατριβας.*

† Luc. Nocyom. p. 328.

‡ Id. Revivis. p. 410.

§ Bens. in Loc.

redundant,

servation of the incomparable Grotius, that the adversative particle *αλλά*, BUT, is redundant, after the manner of the Hebrews, is here without foundation. The truth is, that the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses are all ill pointed, and by this means one of the most beautiful and moving passages, that I ever met with in the whole course of my reading, is almost quite obscured, and kept out of the reader's view. Let us consider the whole.

The apostle disclaims all private views of human applause and glory: *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.* This is what deceivers generally make the first object of their endeavours, viz. to secure an honourable esteem and reputation from others; because it is necessary they should insinuate themselves into their good opinion, in order the more effectually to deceive them. And herein the philosophers were remarkably guilty. Lucian tells us *, “ That he found them not at all fond of philosophy, but of the honour and reputation that proceeds from it; and that those of them who taught that glory must be despised, yet governed their whole views by it, and did every thing to secure it †.” But how different was our apostle, who in the integrity of his heart could say, *Neither of you, nor yet of others, sought we glory?* ‘ this was not the object of our ambition,’ *δυναμενοι εν βαρει ειναι*, when, or though we might have been burthensome to you, as we badly render it ‡. But what connection is there between these two things, not seeking glory from the Thessalonians, and having a right of being burthensome to them? What natural opposition between *vain-glory* and being *burthensome*? If he had said, “ We asked no supplies from you, neither for ourselves or others, though we had a right to have laid this burthen on you as apostles;” the condescension and self-denial had been evident: But the disclaiming all views of human honour, when he had a right to be burthensome, is somewhat so unconnected and exceeding low, that I cannot persuade myself it was the apostle's meaning: Not to add, that if the original word *βαρος*, hath the signification of *burthen* in this place, the form of the expression *εν βαρει* will necessarily denote, his being under a weight and pressure himself, and not a right of being burthensome to others §. The truth is, that the word here doth not signify a *burthen*, but the *weight*, the *gravity*, the *dignity*, and authority of the apostolic character. *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, tho' we had the power of being in authority*, or of using and insisting upon our dignity and authority as apostles: what confirms this interpretation is, not only its perfectly suiting the context, but its being rendered in this sense by the ancient Syriac version, which translates it *ܐܪܝܐ*, *honorabiles*, *preciosi*; and explained by the Greek || commentators, *η εν τιμη, και δοξη, και ογκω*, by ‘ being in honour, and glory, and dignity.’ [The seventy also render the word *ܐܪܝܐ*, *honorabilis*, by *βαρυς*, Dan. ii. 11.] In the

* *Ορων πολλους εκ ερωτι φιλοσοφιας εχομενες, αλλα δοξης μονον της απο τε πραγματος.* Revivisc. p. 407.

† *Τας τε την δοξαν αποβαλλομενες, αυτης ενεκα παντα επιτηδευοντας.* Nesyom. p. 328.

‡ *Εν τιμης οντων, in honore collocati.* Isoc. p. 207. c. *Εγεννηθη εν δοξη,* 2 Cor. iii. 7. *εν τω κατω ην.* Antiph. Orat. p. 22. 26. 27.

§ Thus *εν χρεια ειναι*, is ‘ to be in want.’ Phaler. Epist. 148. On the contrary when the being burthensome to others is denoted, the expression is; *βαρεα τινι ειναι.* Apud eund. Epist. ead. *εν τυαρνιδι και πλατω και τρυφαις οντων.* Isoc. p. 107. l. 1. Eurip. apud Stob. p. 221. l. 58.

|| Theophylact. Oecumenius.

same sense also βαρος is used by profane authors *, viz. to denote *gravity, dignity, and authority*. So that the apostle's meaning is, "We sought glory of no man, though we might have insisted on the dignity of our apostolic office, and have taken on us the authority, the weight, and state of that high office." No: but we were *gentle amongst you*. The word *ηπιος* signifies *humane, indulgent*: profane writers † make it the epithet of a father, to signify the most indulgent and affectionate father. How beautiful, how strong is the opposition here! *We sought no glory of you*, though we might have put on the state, and claimed the honours due to an apostle; but, instead of this, we behaved amongst you, as a tender and affectionate father towards his children: and as though this were not engaging enough, he adds a circumstance, which no words can heighten, and concerning which no expressions can convey a greater tenderness; if you will read the last part of the seventh verse in connection with the eighth.

T E X T.

Ver. 8. *As a nurse cherishes her children, so we being affectionately desirous of you, were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear to us.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word τροφος doth not here denote a nurse that suckles others' children, but a mother that warms and nourishes and suckles her own. The Greek is more emphatical than our translation; *as a nurse*, a nursing mother, θालπη τα εαυτης τεκνα, *cherishes and suckles her own children*, warms them in her bosom, and feeds them with her milk; *so we being affectionately desirous of you ‡*, or, as it should have been rendered, *affectionately loving you, were willing to have imparted to you*, ευδοκουμεν || μεταδεναι υμιν, would with pleasure have imparted to you, *not the gospel of God only, this we were in duty bound to do, but our own souls*, our very lives, to have done you service, viz. *because ye were dear to us*; so affectionately did we love you: how beautiful is this comparison! How tender, how engaging the expressions of this divine apostle! The fondness of an indulgent father to his children is very great: the tenderness of a mother is yet stronger; it is peculiarly strong to their tender infants, but strongest of all to them when they cherish and warm them in their bosoms, and especially when they hang upon the breast, and are suckled with their milk: nature cannot furnish out an image of greater tenderness than this; such was our apostle to his Thessalonians: he considers them as in the infancy of their conversion; himself, as the tender mother nourishing and

* Plutarch. in Pericle. p. 172. c. ως εδεις βαρος εχων ισορροπον εδ' αξιωμα προς τοσαυτην εχεγγυον ηγεμονιαν εφαινετο. Ubi neminem ullum perspexit pari pondere et autoritate quæ tanto esset imperio sustinendo. Sic. Diog. Laert. vit. Polem. l. 4. § 19. την τε ανακτιαν και τον αυχμον ενεδεδυτο τ' ανδρος και το βαρος. Illius innocentiam et ficitatem semper meminit, et viri gravitatem induerat. In the same sense pondus is also used by the Latins. Diod. Sic. l. 4. p. 265. Αθηναιοι δια το βαρος της πολεως φρονιματος ενεπιμπλαντο, και της των Ελληνων ηγεμονιας ωρεχθησαν.

† Homer. Iliad. ω. υ. 770. where Helena speaking of Hector, says of him, Πατηρ ως ηπιος αιει. Herodian. l. 2. c. 6. § 3. speaking of Pertinax, whom the soldiers had murdered, tells us, that the senate lamented him as πατερα τε ηπιον και χρησον προςατην; 'as a gentle indulgent father, and a good governor.'

‡ Ιμειρομενοι. Hesych. ιμειρει. επιθυμει. θελει. Non tantum a poetis usurpatur, ιμειρεται. ερα, επιθυμει, ποθει, ut vult Grotius. vid. Raphel. Herod. p. 558.

|| Fallitur Grotius, qui verbum ευδοκειν, apud 70 tantum interpretes infinitivo jungi dixit. Vid. Raph. l. in Observ. ex Polyb. ad h. loc. et Mat. iii. 17.

cherishing them ; *the gospel of God*, as the milk with which he fed them ; *his very soul and life*, as what he was willing to part with for their safety and benefit : He could die for them, if their preservation and welfare required it. Could the fondest passion of the tenderest mother carry her farther, or prompt her to do more for the helpless infant, drawing in life, and warmth, and nourishment from her breast ? I think nothing can exceed the elegance, the strength, the tender passion, the moving affection of this description, and that a man must have no bowels that doth not find them moved by so fine, so lively, and warm a scene. I shall conclude these reflections with observing,

1. The high character here given of the gospel : *The gospel of God* ; so called twice in this passage, ver. 2. 8. and also ver. 9. The revelation we enjoy is *good news from God* ; its original is from him, and it is clothed with his authority.

2. The awful and encouraging character here given of God ; *he searcheth the hearts* of all men, and *approveth the hearts* of the upright and sincere. Let nothing be harboured within them, that is offensive to his eye, and unworthy of his commendation !

3. Lastly, the affectionate concern with which the apostle preached the gospel, should engage us to receive this heavenly food with a suitable eagerness and love ; or, in the words of St. Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby* ; it is the genuine, the only food, that can train us up in virtue, and nourish us up to eternal life ; it will, if lived on, convey health and strength, and vigour of soul, preserve all our reasonable powers active and lively, and maintain all virtuous dispositions and gracious habits in full and constant exercise. The nourishment it communicates, hath no evil and hurtful mixtures, to clog, to weaken, or destroy the rational powers : No, it diffuses cheerfulness of spirits, the most perfect ease and soundness through every capacity, braces up all the nerves of virtuous action, and renders the whole rational, spiritual constitution firm, athletic, and immortal. Let therefore the word of God be your daily food ; live by its principles, and live upon its promises ; and thus the life of God and heaven will be begun in you now, and hereafter come to its full maturity and perfection in that happy state, where immortality is the portion of every christian, and substantial happiness their sure inheritance, to render that immortality desirable.

Having thus expressed the tenderness of his affection towards them, and his willingness to have *imparted to them, not only the gospel of God, but even his own soul and life*, had it been necessary, for their service ; he proceeds to mention a circumstance, that was the strongest proof of the strength and disinterestedness of his love towards them.

TEXT.

Ver. 9. *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel ; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

COMMENTARY.

St. Paul frequently speaks, in his letters to the churches of his peculiar labours, in preaching the gospel of Christ ; 2 Cor. xi. 23. *In labours*, says he, *I am more abundant* ; for besides the care of all the churches, ver. 28. viz. gathered from amongst the Gentiles, which came upon him, he was in journeying often, in frequent perils, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often,

in cold and nakedness, ver. 26, 27. These were labours of a very severe and trying nature: but he seems here to refer in a particular manner to the labour and pains he took, in working with his own hands, to maintain himself and his companions, in the places where he preached the gospel. Thus he tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 12. *We labour working with our own hands*: and to the bishops of the Ephesian church he declares, Acts xx. 34. *You yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me*. And to these very Thessalonians he says, 2 Theff. iii. 8. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but we wrought with labour, and travel, night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you*. And agreeable to this account which the apostle gives of himself, St. Luke, in his history of him, tells us, Acts xviii. 3. that when he came to Corinth, he went to Aquila and Priscilla, and *because he was of the same craft, or trade as they were, abode with them, being by their occupation tent-makers*. So that our apostle, whilst he laboured for the salvation of others in preaching the gospel, laboured for his own and companions maintenance, in making of tents: and so indefatigable was he, that *he wrought night and day*, 2 Theff. iii. 8. that he might supply his wants, and might not be burthensome to any of the Thessalonians. The first converts seem generally to have been every where of the poorer sort, and not able to contribute much to support the apostle in his ministry amongst them. What he tells the Corinthians is applicable to the far greater part of the primitive christians, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. *Ye see your calling, brethren; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak, the base things of the world, the things which are despised, and are not*, i. e. 'the meanest and the lowest part of mankind': and therefore, that he might not render the gospel burthensome and expensive to them, and might convince them that he was acted by no selfish and worldly views, but by a disinterested concern for their salvation, he chose to maintain himself by the industry and labour of his own hands: how glorious, how rare an example of zeal for the honour of God, of indefatigable diligence, and of wonderful generosity and goodness!

And to sum up the whole of this account, he adds:

T E X T.

Ver. 10, 11, 12. *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves amongst you that believed; as you know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

A very solemn appeal this upon a very important occasion; and a noble period, full of majesty and grace!

What apparent integrity appears in these words! *You are witnesses, and God*; and how unreasonable is the censure of an ignorant, prejudiced Jew*, who blames the apostle for want of reverence to God, in appealing first to the Thessalonians, and then to God. But who doth not see, that the rising of the appeal from the lesser to the greater, is with the highest judgment and propriety? and that though the appealing to men for our integrity argues a noble confidence and security of mind, yet it is still an higher

* Wolf. in loc.

proof of innocence, to carry the appeal to his tribunal, whom it is absolutely impossible to deceive.

How glorious the occasion that gave rise to this appeal! *how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves amongst you that believed**: *how holily*, with respect to God: *how justly*, with regard to the whole of his conduct towards men: *how unblamably*, ἀμεπλως, without giving any just occasion of complaint to any of you, who have believed the gospel we preached, in the manner of our instruction, or the methods we made use of to bring you to the acknowledgement of the truth in Jesus.

Even as you know how that we exhorted you, and comforted you, and besought every one of you †, as a father doth his children. How affectionate, how engaging, how powerful this manner of instruction! The character of a father implies tenderness and authority. As such he exhorted ‡ them, earnestly and seriously entreated them; he comforted them, mixed his exhortations with the noblest arguments of support under their afflictions, and persecutions: and charged every one || of them; μαρτυρημενοι signifies sometimes, beseeching and conjuring them in the most solemn manner, and testifying to them the absolute necessity, that they should walk worthy of God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory, i. e. 'with a dignity of behaviour suitable to the high privilege the goodness of God had favoured them with, in calling them into the glorious kingdom of his dear Son, and making them heirs of his eternal kingdom and glory.'

And as the apostle thus faithfully and warmly exhorted and entreated them; so he had the pleasure to find his labour and care were not altogether in vain.

TEXT.

Ver. 13. *For this cause also, says he, we thank God without ceasing, that when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.*

COMMENTARY.

Having thus appealed to God and them for the unblamableness of his conduct, and his zeal and fidelity in his ministry; he commendeth them for the just regard they paid to it; and their sincerity and cheerfulness in submitting to the great design of it.

There is an elegance in the apostle's expression here, which is wholly lost in our translation, and perhaps not so easy to express in our language by one word. In our version we have the word *received* twice; whereas the apostle makes use of two very different words, one of which conveys a much more significant meaning than the other. When ye received the word of God, or, as it should be rendered, *the word or doctrine concerning God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men.* In the former part of the sentence, the word *receiving* παραλαβοντες denotes the

* Vid. Raphel. ex Polyb. an.

† Putat Grotius subaudiendam esse vocem ημεν post participia more Hebræorum; quasi hoc non fuit solenne etiam optimis Græcis scriptoribus.

‡ Vid. Hesych. in Vocibus.

|| Ενα εκασον υμων—υμας, ubi Beza. υμας redundat ex Hebræorum idiotismo. sed est etiam ex more Græcorum.

taking any thing proposed to us into our consideration, so as to pass a proper judgment upon it, in order, as we find it, to approve or reject it. Thus the Thessalonians *received the word of God*, upon the apostle's first preaching it: they gave it a fair hearing, and impartially considered the nature of it, and the evidence by which it was confirmed. Hence it is called *λογον ακοης*, literally, *the word of hearing*, or report; the word which you heard, and which by us was proposed to you: or, as the words may be rendered more agreeably; not, as in our translation, *the word of God which ye heard of us*; but, the word of the report of, or concerning God. We have two parallel places that justify this interpretation; Heb. iv. 2. *Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. But the word preached*, *λογος ακοης*, is *the word of the report*, the gospel that was preached or reported to them. And in another place, it is said that Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, Matt. xiv. 1. *την ακοην Ιησου ηκουσεν*, *the report concerning Jesus*, exactly as in the place before us, *ακοης τε Θεου*, the report of, or concerning God. The Thessalonians *received the word*, the doctrine of the report of God, or the doctrine which they heard reported concerning God by the apostles; which I think is the true critical meaning of the place, and carries in it a plain allusion to that place, Isa. liii. 1. *τις επιστευσε τη ακοη ημων*, who hath believed, &c. And I would only farther observe, that this signification of *ακοη*, as denoting a report is not peculiar to the sacred classics, but may be found in the best of profane ones. *Αγων δ' ακοη κρυφιον θυμον βαρυνει. Civium fama occulte animum molestat.* Pind. Pyth. i. v. 162. And this sense agrees with the original meaning of the word, because a report is a thing that is heard*. Probably the expression is defective, and being fully supplied, will stand thus; *λογον εξ ακοης περι τε Θεου. εξ ακοης ισοραμεν. ex fama referimus.* Diod. Sic. l. 1. p. 75. a. and what is nearer, *λογον εισηγησατο εκ παλαιας ακοης.* Plat. in Tim. p. 20. D. † This ellipsis of the preposition *περι* is frequent after the verb *ακω*. Vid. Bos. Ellip. p. 386; and of *εκ*. Vid. eund. p. 342, &c. And this destroys the Hebraism of this place, which Grotius and others, after him, point out here. Vid. etiam Raphel. Annot. ex Herod. p. 559. In the latter part of the sentence, the word *receiving* signifies to approve and embrace, in consequence of having seriously considered and examined it. Thus the Thessalonians *received the word of the gospel*, approved, and believed, and regarded it, *not as the word of man*, not as a doctrine that the apostle had artfully invented, and that depended solely on his affirmation and authority; but as it really was the word of God, of divine original, agreeable to the will of God, and confirmed by the testimony of his Spirit.

I would only farther remark on this passage, that the particle *as* is twice inserted and repeated in this verse in our version, I think, without any reason: for as it is not in the original, so the sense doth not require it, but is, in my judgment, much better without it. We render it: *Ye received it not as the word of men, but as the word of God*; whereas I would render the whole passage thus: *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, that when ye received the word, the doctrine which ye heard reported by us concerning God, ye embraced not the doctrine of man, but the doctrine of God, as in truth it is*: so that the apostle had this double reason of thank-

* *Ακοη potest etiam significare idem quod ακασμα, præceptum, sive instructio quæ auditur. Verbum scilicet instructionis, eodem sensu quo dicitur alicui apud Isoc. p. 4. c. πολλων κ' χαλων ακασµατων πεπληρωµενος, p. 5. l. 4. a fine.*

† *Κωτα την Ζολωγος ακοην: sicut audivisti a Solone.* Plat. Tim. p. 21. A.

fulness to God, that the doctrine he preached concerning God was really from him, and that he had been instrumental to persuade the Thessalonians to embrace it.

Which doctrine, the apostle adds, *worketh in you that believe*. The word *εργαζεται* may be rendered either passively, *is effectual*, obtains its genuine effect amongst you who believe: or actively, as we render it; *which worketh in you who believe*, is a powerful principle producing in you who believe, its genuine fruits, and particularly those of patience and fortitude under your persecutions and sufferings. For thus it follows:

T E X T.

Ver. 14, 15, 16. *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

These words shew the efficacy and good influence of the faith of the Thessalonians, in their resolution and perseverance under persecution; and contain several noble arguments for their continued steadfastness and patience; such as their fellowship with the Jewish churches, in their sufferings, who were first converted to Christ; yea what is more, their fellowship with Christ himself, who was put to death by the Jews, for the cause of God; with the ancient prophets, who were persecuted and destroyed by their cruelty; and with the apostles themselves, who were pursued by them with an insatiable malice and fury. And as the Jews were the principal enemies of the gospel, he farther puts them in mind of their obstinate and incurable wickedness, and assures them, that as they were filling up the measure of their iniquities, so wrath was coming on them to the uttermost. Each of which considerations had its weight to comfort, support, and establish them*.

Ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. The churches of God in Christ Jesus, are those churches who worship one God, and believe in Christ Jesus, or are called, or chosen, or sanctified in Christ Jesus†. For, *to be in Christ*, is manifestly a defective form of speech, and must be supplied by some suitable word, which the sacred writings will furnish us with. Of those churches in Judæa the Thessalonians were followers, or imitators, not only as they had embraced their faith, but as they were partakers with them in the like persecutions for the sake of Christ. For thus it is added:

Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have, viz. as the churches of Judea have, of their countrymen the Jews, Acts xvii. 4, 2. In the infancy of the christian church in Judea, the unbelieving Jews raised a severe and bloody persecution against it; when the gospel was first preached at Thessalonica, though some few of them, *επειθυσαν*, were persuaded to embrace the gospel, viz. by St. Paul's reasonings out of the scripture, and of the devout Greeks, a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few; yet, the generality of the Jews, moved with envy at the success of the gospel, set the city

* Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris.

† Τη εκκλησια τα Θεα ηγιασμενοις εν Χριστω Ιησου. 1 Cor. i. 2. εκλεκτον εν Κυριω, Rom. xvi. 13.

in an uproar, and excited the magistrates and common people, who were Macedonians and heathens against them: so that the Jews themselves persecuted the christians in Judea: and in the cities of the Gentiles, where they had no power, excited the rulers and people to destroy them; by charging them with subverting the laws of Cæsar, verse 7, and setting up another king, even Jesus, in opposition to him. This drew on the Thessalonian converts the resentment of the government, and inhabitants of that city, which the apostle rightly calls, suffering from their own * countrymen; those of the same nation with themselves.

And as this persecution was raised by the Jews, and as they were implacable enemies to Christ and his gospel, the apostle gives them the description they deserved, that the Thessalonian converts might not be surprised and staggered at finding them their most bitter and outrageous persecutors. For if the gospel was really a religion from God, and Christ that Messiah, which was promised in the sacred writings of the Jews; it might seem at first view strange, that they should be the principal enemies of those who believed in him: but this wonder would immediately cease, when their real character came to be fully known: for this reason the apostle thus describes them.

They killed the Lord Jesus; they preferred a murderer before him, and put him to the shameful and accursed death of the cross.

They killed their own prophets: The observation here that is made by some persons †, that because some few copies omit the words *ιδίας, their own*, therefore the prophets here mentioned are New Testament prophets, Stephen, and James, is really trifling. For if that word was wanting originally, yet to suppose the apostle meant New Testament prophets, would spoil the beauty and strength of this passage. His evident design is to shew, that it was no wonder they persecuted the christian converts in every place. But how low is the argument, that it was not surprising they should persecute the christians every where, because they murdered two persons, viz. Stephen and James? No. the apostle's words have more warmth, energy, and force. They persecuted the churches of Christ in Judea, they persecute you, and follow us with insatiable malice, wherever they can reach us; and no wonder: they are a persecuting race, a murderous generation. They put to death the Lord of Life and Glory himself. They murdered their own prophets in former ages. The very reproach thrown on them by Christ himself. *Ye are witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers; that upon you may come all the righteous blood upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias: behold your house is left unto you desolate*, Matt. xxiii. 31, &c. And unto this passage I doubt not the apostle had a reference. In like manner, the proto-martyr Stephen, *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers*, Acts vii. 52. Who doth not see the noble warmth,

* Συμφυλετών, Hesychius explains the word by ομοειδών, those of the same nation. It is a rash remark of Joachinus Camerarius on this place, who after this word, immediately adds, βαρβαρίζει, the apostle is guilty of a Barbarism, or using a bad word that is not Greek: for the word is used by one of the most ancient and principal orators of Greece; even by Isocrates in his Panathenaic.

† Benson.

the just and generous indignation of humanity and benevolence in such reproaches ! The apostle adds :

They have persecuted us : followed us, the apostles of the Lord, from city to city ; persecuted me, and my companions, inflaming all they can influence amongst the nations, to harass and destroy us : nor is this to be wondered at from such a profligate people :

For they please not God. Much more is intended than the words express, by a figure common to the best writers. *They please not God :* The meaning is ; so far are they from doing those things that he approves, that they abound in those practices that are highly displeasing and offensive to him, and are in reality enemies to God by wicked works ; implacable enemies to the interest, the religion, and kingdom of God. The testimony of one of their own countrymen, of their own religion and priesthood, Josephus the historian, confirms this account of St. Paul, beyond all exception: he tells us*, that the city was full of numerous impieties; and in another place, that no city ever suffered such things, and that there never was any generation more fruitful of wickedness †. He frequently reproaches them for their impieties toward God, and calls them Θεοσυγείς, “ haters of God ;” and to compleat their character, adds this dreadful description of them ‡: “ I will not scruple to say what my grief commands me ; I think that if the Romans had delayed to take vengeance on these wretches, they would either have been swallowed up by an earthquake, or that the city would have been swept away by a deluge, or that they would have partaken of the thunders of Sodom ; for they were a more impious generation than they who suffered these calamities.”

And as they were thus impious towards God, so the apostle adds, *They are contrary to all men.* The original word ἐναντίων §, hath a stronger signification, and denotes enemies, in a state of hostile opposition ; and this was the true character of the Jews, that they were enemies to all mankind. This charge Josephus || acknowledges was thrown on them by their enemies, who reproached them ως αἰεὶ καὶ μισανθρώπους, ‘ as impious towards God and haters of men ;’ and as swearing by God, the Creator of heaven and earth, μηδενὶ ἐννοησεῖν ἀλλοφυλῶ **, that they would be benevolent to no strangers. And Apollonius in Philostratus observes of them : Εκείνοι μὲν γὰρ παλαι ἀφῆσασιν ἔμονον Ῥωμαίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ††, that they were alienated not only from the Romans, but from all men. Justin the historian observes of them ‡‡, that it was part of their religion to have no communication with strangers. Juvenal the satirist says of them |||, ‘ that they would

* Τόστων μισοματῶν γεμιστὴν πόλιν. de Bel. Jud. l. 6. c. 2. § 1. p. 375.

† Μίστε πόλιν ἀλλήν τοιαῦτα πεπονθεῖναι, μήτε γενεὰν ἐξ αἰῶνος γεγενῆσθαι κακίας γονιμωτέραν. Ibid. l. 5. c. 10. § 5. init.

‡ Ἐκ ἀνὺποσειλαιμὴν ἠπεία μοι κέλευει τὸ πάθος. Οἶμαι Ῥωμαίων βραδυνόντων ἐπὶ τῆς αλτιερίας, ἢ καταποθῆναι ἀνὺπο χάσματος, ἢ κατακλυθῆναι τὴν πόλιν, ἢ τῆς τῆς Σολωμῆνης μεταλαβεῖν κεραυνῆς. Πολὺ γὰρ τῶν ταῦτα παθόντων ἐνέγε καὶ γενεὰν ἀθεωτέραν. De Bel. Jud. l. 5. c. 13. § 6. in fin.

§ Τῶν δὲ ἐναντίων ἀμεριμνόντων εἶναι τὴν φρεσὶν οἰομένων. Quum adversarii de praesidio secuti erant. Herod. l. 3. c. 3. § 9.

|| Cont. Ap. l. 2. c. 14.

** Id. Ib. §. 10.

†† L. 5. p. 241.

‡‡ L. 36. c. 2. Caverunt ne cum peregrinis communicarent, quod— paulatim in disciplinam religionemque convertit.

||| Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,
Quasitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.

Sat. 14. v. 103, 104.

‘not so much as shew the way to a person who was not of their religion, nor direct any but a Jew to a spring of water to refresh them.’ And to mention no more on this head, Tacitus, the Roman historian, describes them *, “as maintaining an inviolable fidelity amongst themselves, and always ready to shew mercy to one another; but as cherishing an hostile hatred to all the rest of mankind.”

And indeed if we had not these testimonies of profane writers, yet the next circumstance, which the apostle adds, is an abundant demonstration of their being enemies to all mankind; *forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved*; i. e. ‘to preach to the Gentiles this doctrine, that they might be saved by faith in Christ;’ for the meaning is not, forbidding us to preach to them in order to their salvation, but to preach the doctrine of the possibility of their salvation by faith alone. The Jews had no objection against the salvation of the Gentiles, provided they would submit to circumcision and the law of Moses; nor would they have had any objection against the apostles preaching to them in order to their salvation upon these terms. The thing they abhorred, and for which they persecuted the apostle was, his preaching the doctrine of salvation to them by faith alone, without any regard to the Mosaic law, as appears from the whole history of the propagation of the gospel. This they forbid the apostle to do, and with their utmost malice and power endeavoured to prevent.

And this they did, says the apostle, *that they might fill up their sins always*. They had murdered Christ; yet God gave them some further space for repentance, and to obtain the gospel salvation; but as they obstinately opposed the preaching and progress of it, persecuted the disciples of Christ, and did all they could to hinder the doctrine of salvation being preached to the Gentiles; as they would neither be saved themselves, nor suffer, if they could help it, others to be saved, this was such inveterate, incurable malice and wickedness, as completed their guilt; whereby they proved themselves the true children of their parents, and made it a national character, that they *were always filling up the measure of their sins*. For it is this the apostle insinuates by the word *always*, viz. ‘that they were like their parents, in the obstinacy and incurableness of their vice.’

And therefore he finally adds, *for, or rather, but, wrath is come on them to the uttermost*. As their sins are come to their full height, so vengeance is prepared for them to their utter destruction, now hangs over their heads, and shall soon fall on them in full measure and weight. The expression *εις τελος* signifies in profane writers two things, both applicable to this place, either to the full measure of any thing, or else to the † end and consummation of any thing. Thus, wrath is coming on them to the full, the highest vengeance is preparing for them; or such final wrath as shall perfect and consummate their destruction. The two senses are coincident, and both of them implied in the words as used by the apostle, as the event fully proved.

I shall only add, that the apostle speaks in this manner of his countrymen the Jews, not from any unreasonable prejudice against them, or hatred of them, but from a just resentment of their obstinate and implacable hatred and opposition to Christianity. The apostle loved them with the greatest tenderness; he had *great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart*, Rom. ix. 1. upon account of their infidelity: and if that would contribute to their conversion and salvation, he could wish *that he were*

* Hist. l. 5. c. 5.

† Την φυσικην ακροασιν μετεληλυθει εις τελος, *physicam disciplinam ad finem usque percurrerat*. Lucian. v. 2. Philops. p. 335.

accursed from Christ, cut off from the benefits and communion of his church, for their sake. But as he saw they were incurable in their wickedness, and had learned by a prophetic spirit, that the sentence of destruction was gone out against them, and as they were the principal persecutors of the Thessalonian converts, he gives the latter this ground of consolation and encouragement, viz. that their persecutions arose from an extremely wicked, hardened, and incorrigible people, who were haters of God, the murderers of Christ and their own prophets, enemies to truth and righteousness, and the common enemies of all mankind; for whom God was preparing the utmost vengeance, and over whose heads hung an irreversibile and entire destruction. This prediction of the apostle was fulfilled not many years after by the Roman army under Vespasian and Titus, who, as Daniel had foretold, Dan. ix. 24. &c. destroyed the city and the sanctuary, fully finished their transgression, caused the end thereof to be with a flood, and overspread that miserable people with such an entire desolation, as remains on them to this day, and which shall continue till that determined wrath shall be poured out upon the desolate.—And in this place the chapter should have ended, the apostle beginning a new subject at the 17th verse. Which he treats of to the end of the third chapter.

The PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS on this part are such as these.

With respect to the GOSPEL.

1. Its high character is, that it is the word, the gospel of God; a character of it which the apostle inculcates, because it is this divine original of it that renders it worthy of acceptance, and makes it effectual to the salvation of men, ver. 2. 4. 8. 9. 13.
2. That when proposed to us, it ought to be seriously considered, and impartially examined, as to its evidence and proof, the truth of its doctrines, the excellency of its promises, and the reasonableness and advantage of the precepts it gives us, verse 13.
3. That in consequence of such considerations, when the evidence of its truth is clearly discerned, and the excellent design and tendency of it is fully apprehended, it ought then to be received, approved, and submitted to, not as the word of men, not as the mere reasonings of their minds, not as a doctrine of human original, and that hath nothing higher to recommend it than human authority, tho' men are employed as the instruments to preach and deliver it to others; but under that superior character which really belongs to it, as the word, the gospel, the doctrine of God, taught by the inspiration of his Spirit, agreeable to his will, and clothed with his sacred authority, verse 13.
4. That notwithstanding the intrinsic excellency and divine original of the gospel, yet a thorough firm belief of it as a revelation from God, is absolutely necessary to its producing its genuine fruits in the tempers and lives of men, without which it will remain as a dead letter, void of all influence and energy to sanctify, comfort, and save us. It is this faith that gives it its life and power, and renders it mighty to reconcile us to God, to subdue all our principles and passions into an obedience to his will, and to prepare us for his heavenly kingdom and glory.
5. That whenever the word and gospel of God is thus embraced with a firm and fixed belief, it will become effectual, and produce the most excellent and valuable fruits, such as constancy and perseverance in the profession of it, patience and fortitude

itude under suffering and persecution on account of it, and a life suitable to, and worthy of, the greatness of those privileges it promises and ensures. Thus received, it will be quick and powerful, purify the conscience, reform the practice, fill the mind with every grace, adorn the life with every virtue, cause the consolations of God to abound, and create a substantial meetness for the blessedness of eternal life. Ver. 13. 14. compared.

With respect to CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

1. It is their dignity and their privilege, and great security, that they are the churches of God, gathered by his authority, worshipping him as their supreme and immediate object, under his protection, entitled to his special favour; united in the common means of life and salvation, and in the same hopes of the heavenly and eternal inheritance. And,

2. They are the churches of God in Christ Jesus, called by his gospel, sanctified and separated from the world by the gifts of his Spirit, met together in his name, as their common saviour, advocate and intercessor, filled with the lively hope and expectation of his second appearance from heaven, in order hereafter to make them partakers of a blessed resurrection to life and immortality, to deliver them entirely from the wrath to come, to bring them to his glory, and introduce them finally into the presence of God his father.

With respect to OATHS, or SOLEMN APPEALS TO GOD.

We have here abundant proof of their lawfulness, fitness, and importance. The nature of an oath is a solemn appeal to the great God for the truth of what we speak and affirm; and necessarily supposes his perfect knowledge of our words and intentions, his approbation of truth and righteousness, his hatred of lying and perjury, and his power and disposition to reward or punish us, according as what we declare is either true or false. In this passage the apostle makes this awful appeal twice. *Neither at any time used we flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness,* verse 5. And again, verse 10. *Ye are witnesses and God also. To you I appeal, and to God, the heart-searching God, how honestly, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves amongst you.* And these appeals are real oaths, to confirm the truth of what the apostle affirms. And as they are solemn acknowledgments of the perfections and providence of God, and necessarily imply in them the sense we have of our dependence on him, and of our being entirely subject and accountable to him, they are in their nature as proper and as lawful instances of adoration, as any other whatsoever; and their fitness, and use is here confirmed by the example of an inspired apostle. It is true, they ought ever to be made with great seriousness, and never but upon extraordinary occasions. The frequency of them, and the introducing them into every concern of life, debases their dignity, takes away their solemnity, and gives occasion to frequent perjuries. Would to God there was no occasion to complain of these impieties amongst ourselves, and that he would put it into the hearts of our governors to put a stop to so notorious and monstrous a wickedness! However, these abuses are no condemnation of the thing itself; and every good man may lawfully take them, whenever any important occasion happens that requires this kind of satisfaction.

With

With respect to our CHRISTIAN CALLING.

The great dignity and excellency of it is here described.

1. It hath God for its author. God hath called them, verse 12. The apostles were his messengers, speaking in his name, and by a power and authority derived from him. All the promises they made to men, were by virtue of his commission; all the encouragements they set before them, were what he ordered and commanded them to give; the superior hopes to which they are raised are built upon the sure foundation of his veracity and power; and the glorious end of their faith is the grand motive he hath proposed to fidelity and perseverance.

2. As it hath God for its author; so it hath his kingdom and glory for its principal and ultimate object.

The DUTY of CHRISTIANS with respect to this their CALLING.

1. They ought frequently to consider it and attend to it. This was what the apostle frequently put the Thessalonians in mind of, in order to support and encourage them in their Christian profession. It is the highest honour God hath to confer on human nature; it is a substantial blessedness, in comparison of which all earthly good is mere emptiness and shadow. This kingdom and glory therefore should frequently employ our thoughts, be the object of our highest ambition, and what all the actions of our lives should be directed to secure.

2. They should walk worthy of God who hath called them to this his kingdom and glory.

With respect to MINISTERS.

There are several characters of great importance laid down and intimated by the apostle for their conduct and behaviour, and that the Christian church in general may learn what to expect from them, and know what their governing disposition and practice should be, I shall reduce them under proper heads.

As to the Nature of their WORK.

1. It is an employment of great dignity; for they preach *the gospel, the word of God.* *We were bold to preach to you the gospel of God,* verse 2. So that let their office appear to others as contemptible as they please, yet it is nevertheless an honour that they may value themselves upon, that the gospel they preach is *not the word of man, but in truth the word of God.* And as their office is thus truly honourable, so there is a respect due to it, which they may reasonably expect from those to whom they minister, and as to which there are seasons when they may lawfully insist on it. We might have been burthensome, we had a right to demand the honours that belong to us as the apostles of Christ, verse 6. It is true, that the claim of apostolic powers and privileges is now presumption and folly; but as the ministers of Christ preach the gospel of God, there is an honour due to them for their work's sake; and though prudence and higher regards may sometimes make them unwilling to insist on it, yet this is no abridgment of the rights of their character, nor any excuse to those, who refuse to acknowledge and pay them.

2. To this gospel they are to confine themselves, and to be extremely careful that what they deliver to the church of God be drawn from this incorruptible source of truth. *As we were allowed of God,* saith the apostle, *to be put in trust with the gos-*

pel, even so we speak, verse 4. So that if they mix their own passions with their public services, they preach themselves, and not the gospel of Christ; and if they introduce philosophical and intricate disputes, and form themselves upon human systems and decisions, they debase the dignity of their characters, and instead of being the servants of the Lord, they are properly the followers and the servants of men.

3. When their labours become effectual, and the word of the gospel which they preach, is received by their hearers under its sacred character of the word of God, and worketh effectually also in them who believe it, this is matter of the highest pleasure to the ministers of Christ, and should occasion their constant thanksgivings to God. *For this cause we thank God without ceasing, that ye received not the word of men, but the word of God,* ver. 13. And these thanksgivings should be mixed with the most serious prayers to God, that their faith, and love, and hope may be established and confirmed.—And as this is their proper employment and work, so we have here further represented to us in the conduct of the apostle,

The NATURE and MANNER of their preaching the GOSPEL.

1. With great boldness. *We were bold to preach unto you the gospel of God,* ver. 2. They should deliver the great truths of God plainly, and without disguise, not concealing any necessary truth, out of fear of offending any of their hearers, or with a view to please and gratify either their prejudices or vices.

2. With fixed resolution and courage. *We were bold, εν πολλω αγωνι, amidst much contention and opposition, to speak to you the gospel of God,* verse 2. And whether this opposition arises, either from the weakness or wickedness of men, the ministers of Christ must persist in their work, and endeavour by prudence, steadfastness, and the superior evidence of truth, to silence and overcome it.

3. With evident affection to, and a prevailing tenderness for, their people, and an apparent concern for their salvation and happiness. *We were willing to have imparted to you our own lives, because ye were dear to us; and as a nursing-mother cherishes her children, so were we affectionately desirous of you,* verse 7. 8. Such a temper as this, prevalent and habitual in the preachers of the gospel, conciliates respect to the doctrines they teach, and hath a natural tendency to prepare and soften the ground for the reception of the seed of God's word, and to open the heart for believing and obeying the truth.

4. With a governing view to approve themselves to God, who searcheth the heart. *So we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who searcheth the heart,* verse 4. To him we are in an especial manner accountable for our conduct; and in the subjects we deliver, and the whole of our public ministration, it should be our care to act with that simplicity and godly sincerity, as that we may be able to appeal to God, that we have been acted by a single regard to his glory, the benefit of his church, and our final approbation by his sentence.

5. With a due regard to the circumstances of those to whom they preach, and in such a manner as is agreeable to the nature of the doctrines they deliver. *You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,* verse 11. Truth is to be conveyed only by conviction, and instructions are then only likely to become effectual, when delivered in the gentle manner of persuasion and entreaty, and enforced by motives of substantial worth and efficacy. Exhortations prudently given, with a serious and friendly spirit, will generally leave some good impressions, especially if qualified with proper arguments to support

port the mind under the difficulties of the Christian life, and with those affectionate and tender entreaties, with which benevolence and love to the souls of men, will abundantly furnish us. This will add authority and influence to our public services, and give us all that weight over those who hear us, that parents have over their children for their benefit, and enable us to maintain that dignity of character which we should be careful never to forfeit, and the preserving of which is essentially necessary to keep our office from contempt, and our services from being wholly useless and ineffectual.—I cannot omit adding one thing more on this subject, viz.

6. In our public services, there should be a wise and faithful mixture of privilege and duty. *We charged every one of you, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory, ver. 12.* Exhortation to Christian piety, virtue, and good works, is an essential part of our work as the ministers of Christ, and ought upon no accounts or pretences whatsoever to be neglected; and is as truly preaching Christ as insisting upon any other subjects whatsoever. But then, as on the one hand, privilege and promise ought never to be insisted on, without pointing out those characters, and enforcing those duties, which are inseparably connected with them; so on the other, the practice of Christian piety and virtue, and the abounding in all the good works of an holy life, ought always to be inculcated and recommended by motives and arguments peculiar to the gospel, in order to give them their proper authority and influence, drawn from the dignity of the Christian character and profession, from principles of affection and gratitude to God, from a sense of the worth and greatness of those privileges persons enjoy in the Christian church, from the end of their vocation, and the unspeakable greatness of their future recompence in the heavenly kingdom and glory of God. This is the manner of preaching recommended by the example and conduct of this blessed apostle.

AS TO THEIR GOVERNING TEMPER AND CONDUCT.

1. They should maintain a ready disposition, upon all occasions to preach the gospel, and not appear to do it with reluctance and unwillingness, as a matter merely of necessity and constraint; but, from a firm persuasion of the excellency of the doctrine they preach, from an affection to the souls of men, and a view to the divine approbation, they should make it their chosen and delightful work. *We were "willing" to have imparted to you the gospel of God.*

2. They should cherish a constant trust and confidence in the protection and support of God's providence and grace. *We were "bold in God" to speak unto you the gospel, verse 2.* In him is their strength, and from him their present success and future reward; and the consciousness of being employed by him, and engaged in his service, is sufficient to give the truest boldness and courage under the greatest difficulties and persecutions.

3. They should cultivate great gentleness and humility of spirit, and condescend to every thing consistent with a good conscience, in order to promote the conversion and salvation of others; and even abate of their very rights, and wave in some respects their just authority, and the privileges they have a claim to, rather than prejudice their usefulness, or obstruct the progress of the everlasting gospel. *"We sought not glory, though we might have been burthensome,"* might have insisted upon the dignity of our character as the apostles of Christ, *"but we were gentle amongst you,"* ver. 6. 7.

4. They should maintain a disposition always ready to suffer for the cause they engage in, and the truths they preach, whether it be reproach and contempt, op-

position

position to their doctrine or persons, or any kind of persecution in lesser or greater degrees. *We were willing to have imparted to you "our very souls, our lives," because ye were dear to us,* verse 8.

5. They should cherish a thankful spirit to God, for every instance of success, as knowing it is God that gives it, and that it shall contribute to their reward and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord. "*We thank God*" without ceasing, *that ye received the word of God, which worketh effectually in you,* verse 13. Finally,

6. Their whole conduct and behaviour should be *holy*, in the discharge of all the duties of piety towards God; and *justly*, in the practice of every virtue towards men; so that it may be in all respects absolutely *unblameable*, and they may be able to appeal to God and man as witnesses, that *in simplicity and godly sincerity they have had their conversation in the world. Ye are witnesses, and God also, "how holily, and "justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves amongst you that believe,"* verse 10. And in order to this,

The VICES they are to be peculiarly careful of avoiding are such as these:

1. All kind of imposture, fraud, and dissimulation. *Our exhortation was not of deceit or in guile,* verse 3. The gospel of Christ needs not this adulterous, infamous method of support, which yet is the main craft by which the kingdom of darkness, that antichristian Christianity in the church of Rome, is upheld and propagated; viz. by false miracles, by subtle sleights, and crafty tricks, by false representations of persons and doctrines, keeping from men the key of knowledge, leading them on in ignorance and bigotry; whereby they impose on and delude the credulous and unwary multitude.

2. The desire and thirst of human glory and applause, which ought never to enter into their views, nor influence any part of their conduct. *Neither of men sought we glory, nor of you, nor of others,* verse 6.

3. Flattery, by commending others for virtues they have not, or colouring over their real vices, which is great impiety, and unfaithfulness to God, and the souls of men. *Neither at any time used we flattering words, as you know,* verse 5. This is the mean practice of men who suspect their own cause, and have other ends to answer besides the interest of religion and virtue.

4. Akin to this is the affectation of pleasing men, by calculating our doctrines and subjects to their particular relish and taste, and studiously abstaining from such, however true and important in themselves, and essential to Christianity, as may have a tendency to offend them, as do not suit their prejudices and vices, and the insisting on which may lessen our interest in them, and our making an advantage by them. This is a very shameful and criminal conduct, and altogether unlike our apostle, whose conscience bore him witness, that *he spake, not as pleasing men, but God,* verse 4.

5. Pride and haughtiness of behaviour, by assuming on the privileges of their character, boasting of the dignity of their ministerial office, claiming honours and privileges they have no title to, challenging to themselves powers and prerogatives they have never been invested with, and upon this false foundation behaving with insolence to the christian people, and expecting from them that submission and obedience, which neither the reason of things, nor the gospel of our blessed Lord, lays them under any obligations to pay. *We were gentle amongst you, and not burthensome, as the apostles of Christ,* verse 6. 7.

6. Covetousness, by bending all things to our own advantage, setting to sale the
the

the truths of the gospel, preaching only for the lucre and profits that may attend it; and thus changing the house of God into exchanges and shops, or, in the severer language of our blessed Saviour, into *a den of thieves*. O how far distant from this fordid spirit was this generous apostle, who could thus appeal; *Neither used we at any time a cloke of covetousness, God is witness!* And finally,

7. Uncleanness. *Our exhortation was not of deceit nor of uncleanness.* The doctrine of the gospel is pure as the source from whence it flows, a God of infinite rectitude and holiness, and hath not the least tendency to licentiousness and impurity. And therefore the preachers of the gospel ought to be absolutely free from all approaches to criminal indulgences, and by their preaching and practice to shew the utmost abhorrence themselves, and create in others the fullest detestation of all these profligate and destructive gratifications. By maintaining these dispositions, and keeping at the farthest distance from these vices, we shall approve ourselves the ministers of Christ, may hope for success in our work, and confidently expect the promised reward.—I have thus particularly mentioned these things, to shew christians what they ought to expect from every one that claims the ministerial character, encouragement and honour. There is one more subject which this passage of scripture particularly directs us to; and that is,

PERSECUTION:

And here the following things are to be remarked:

1. That all endeavours to oppose the cause of God and religion, and to hinder the progress and success of true Christianity, by any methods of force and violence whatsoever; whether by exciting governors to discourage and oppress the preachers of it, or by exciting popular hatred and clamour against them, or by using them themselves unjustly and hardly, is real and proper persecution, whatsoever be the principle from whence it proceeds, and the spirit that dictates and encourages it. This was the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, for which the apostle so severely reproaches them. *They forbid them to preach to the Gentiles the doctrine of salvation,* verse 16. and endeavoured by all methods of violence to hinder the success of the everlasting gospel; and are for this reason branded with the infamous character of persecutors.

2. Persecution is a crime highly displeasing to God. *They have persecuted us, and they please not God,* verse 15. Persecutors indeed have always specious pretences for their wickedness. Concern for truth, zeal for God, opposition to error, care of others salvation, is oftentimes the language of their mouths, whilst the venom of malice and cruelty infects their hearts, and the instruments of violence and death are in their hands. But as these sanctified pretences do not alter the nature of their actions, so they do not wipe off the guilt that attends them. Persecution is in its nature a crime, and always highly offensive to God.

3. It is a crime that exposes persons to the severest punishment, and highest vengeance from God. It is *filling up the measure of mens iniquity*, as it is really a complication of sins, and thus disposes them for destructive calamities. *Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, for wrath is coming on them to the uttermost,* ver. 16. I think it is some token for good amongst ourselves, that the spirit of persecution seems greatly to have lessened in the nation; and though it cannot be said with truth, (would to God, for the honour and safety of these kingdoms, it could be said) that there are no remains of this scandalous

ous and accursed evil; yet that the evil of it is more generally acknowledged, and the number amongst all parties, that disclaim it, is much greater than formerly. Oh that this wickedness of the wicked may entirely come to a perpetual end; and that none of that guilt, which sunk the Jewish nation and kingdom under total desolation, may remain or break out amongst us, to expose us to the just effects of the divine resentment and anger!

4. That it is some ground of consolation, and indeed a noble support to sincere Christians, in circumstances of affliction and persecution, that it is what the prophets and apostles, and churches of God, in former ages, have suffered; yea, what the Son of God himself, the saviour of mankind, endured from the malice of his enemies; the high dignity of whose person, the sacredness of whose character, the innocence of whose life, the beneficence of whose conduct, and the glory of whose miracles, could not soften the hearts, nor make the malice of his persecutors to relent; who obstinately persisted to embrace their hands in his blood, and put him to a shameful and an accursed death. How bitter and terrible soever persecution may seem, yet let me suffer affliction with the people of God, and share with the great Redeemer of mankind, and his followers and friends, in all the severities of their treatment, from an ungrateful and wicked world, rather than be a partaker in their guilt, and under the influence of their spirit; who by abetting and encouraging a persecuting temper and practice, so far declare themselves to be of one family, and interest, and disposition with those who crucified the Lord of life and glory, destroyed the prophets of God, and the apostles of Christ, harassed and vexed the christian church in its infancy, and have been the avowed enemies and oppressors of truth and righteousness, throughout all the successive ages of it; and of whom he is the proper head and father, who was both a liar and a murderer from the beginning. "Oh my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly be not united, O my honour!" To be persecuted for righteousness sake and a good conscience, hath been the lot of the greatest and best of men in all ages. So persecuted they the Son of God before us. But the character and employment of a persecutor is hateful to God and man, and ripens persons for the heaviest damnation, and for wrath to come upon them to the uttermost. And to conclude all:

5. An habitual and obstinate opposition of the gospel doctrine of salvation and mercy, argues an hostile temper of mind to, and a fixed hatred of, all mankind, verse 15, 16. "They are," saith the apostle of the Jews, "enemies to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." This was in fact the governing, national disposition of the Jews. Partial to themselves, and proud of their descent from Abraham, they would have God to have acted with the same partiality as they did themselves, and to have treated the Gentiles with the same scorn and indignity, that they had practised for many ages towards them. The preaching up their salvation filled them with spite and malice to the gospel, and it was this enmity they bore to them that made them determined enemies to that religion that favoured them. And indeed what is there that can excite a thorough opposition to the gospel doctrine and religion, but a real enmity to the happiness of mankind? That the design of it is benevolent, the very enemies of it must acknowledge; if the saving men from idolatry and superstition, from impiety and vice, from guilt and condemnation, from the worst miseries of this life, and all the punishments of a future state; if promoting the integrity and innocence of some, and bringing others to repentance, and securing eternal sal-
tion

tion and happiness to all, argue a kind and benevolent design. Whence then can the opposition to Christianity proceed, but from the want of a benevolent principle? Whence so many arts to misrepresent it, and destroy the influence and credit of it, but from a real dislike to the salvation it offers, an obstinate resolution to reject it themselves, and a secret aversion that others should obtain it? This is the very Jewish temper that the apostle here censures, and threatens with wrath to the utmost; and wherever it prevails it is a diabolical disposition, and argues such an inveterate malignity of mind, as is contrary to the dictates of humanity itself: not to mention the principles of natural religion, which condemn and reproach such a spirit and behaviour. Let me therefore caution you against ever falling in with those measures, or endeavouring, by ridiculing Christianity in general, by unfair misrepresentations of it, or unjust reproaches of its design and principles, to prevent the influence and success of it upon the consciences and lives of men; for this is in reality an opposition to truth and righteousness, the true interest and honour of God's moral government, and the present virtue and peace, and the future happiness and salvation of mankind.

The great number of Gentiles that were by St. Paul's preaching converted to the christian faith at Thessalonica, Acts xvii. 4. filled the Jews with such a bitterness of resentment and malice, that they inflamed the city against him and the church he had gathered, insomuch that the apostle himself was in the greatest danger; the principal aim of those malicious persecutors being to bring him and Silas out, and expose them to the rage of an incensed and furious mob; as we are particularly informed, Acts xvii. 5. To preserve lives of so great importance to the church of God, the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto the neighbouring city of Berea; so that they were forced away from the proselytes they had made in the infancy of their conversion, and thereby deprived of the opportunity of fully instructing them in the doctrines of Christianity; and had the farther uneasiness of leaving them in a rising storm of persecution, without being able personally to support and comfort them under their afflictions. And it is to this that that part of the epistle I am now to explain hath an immediate and entire reference.

TEXT.

Ver. 17. *But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.*

COMMENTARY.

The word which we render here, "*Being taken from*" you, hath a much more tender and affectionate meaning, and should have been rendered, "*being bereaved of,*" or "*torn from*" you. At the 11th verse, he tells them, *We comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.* He had the affection, and acted the part of a father towards them; and as he was driven from them by violence, he compares the uneasiness he was under on that account, to the distress of a father* robbed of and torn from his children,

* Απορφανισθέντες. Ορφανός, ὁ γονέων ἐσθημένος καὶ τέκνων. Hesych. In posteriori sensu apud Eurip. Hor. v. 150. Ορφανὸν εἶναι παῖδος μελέας. Sic Dionys. Halicarn. R. A. p. 67. φράζει—ὡς ὁ Ἀμφίλοχος—ορφανὸν τέκνων ἐδήκε. Pindar. Olym. Od. 9. v. 92. Μὴ κάθελοι μιν αἰών—ορφανὸν γενεάς. *Ne auferret eum ævum—prole destitutum.* Ubi scholiastes, ΑΤΕΚΝΟΝ. Et Josephus apud Suidam. Καὶ αὐτοὶ πατέρες ἦσαν ορφανοί. *Ipsi patres erant liberis orbat.*

and forced to leave them in circumstances of the most helpless danger; so that it is a word that expresses both the tenderness of his grief, and the sense he had of their destitute and hazardous condition: and what heightened his concern for this separation was, that it was sudden and unexpected, so that he could not take the proper farewell, nor give them the advice of a father at parting. Our version indeed, and all the interpreters that I have seen, by an injudicious translation, lose this circumstance: We render the words *προς καιρον ωρας*, *for a short time*. *Being taken from you for a short time*; as though the apostle intimated, that his absence from them would be but short: but this is contrary to fact; for the apostle tells us in the next verse, that though he would have fain come to them, he was hindered; and, from the history of his travels, it plainly appears, that it was six years before he returned to revisit Macedonia. Nor indeed is there any propriety and justness of thought in the common translation; for how can a father's being even forced to part with his children for a short time, be so very dreadful an affliction? Or why should the apostle write a letter to these Thessalonians, to comfort and establish them during his absence, if he knew or thought it would be so very little a while? or in the same breath tell them, that he was prevented from visiting them, and yet that his absence would be but short. The words that we render, *a short time*, literally signify *in an hour's time*; the same that the apostle elsewhere expresses by *προς ωραν*, 2 Cor. vii. 8. Gal. ii. 5. And the plain rendering of the whole sentence is, *Being bereaved of, or torn from you, at or in the time or space of an hour*; or, as we say, at an hour or moment's warning: and this is agreeable to fact; for the disciples sent him away by night, so suddenly as to prevent his falling into the hands of the mob; and this must have been a very great aggravation of his affliction, that he was bereaved of his children, and that suddenly, and within the space of an hour: but see with what art and tenderness this holy apostle corrects himself! That the Thessalonians might not think themselves forgotten by him, after his separation from them, he adds,

Being torn from you in an hour's space, in presence, not in heart. 'I was forced from you, so that I could not behold you with my face; but my heart was with you: that they could not force and tear away from you with all their rage and violence.' And as the proof of this he farther adds, in very strong expressions:

I endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. *I endeavoured*; the word signifies, *I diligently endeavoured*; and to raise the idea, he adds, *I more abundantly endeavoured to see your face*; and to make his diligence appear as strong as words could do it, concludes, *I endeavoured more abundantly to see you with great desire*: 'My strong affection, my eagerness to see your face, excited me to use the utmost diligence to gratify my wishes.' There is an emphasis and warmth in almost every word of this lively passage: He adds,

T E X T.

Ver. 18. *Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered me.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

He several times attempted to return to Thessalonica, but * Satan prevented him, i. e. threw such obstructions in his way, as hindered him from acting agreeable to his own wishes. Probably, the Jews of Thessalonica so kept up the spirit and rage

* *καὶ ἐνκοπήν. καὶ πρόσθεν*, more Hebræo. Grotius. Sed et usitatum est apud Græcos. Herod. l. i. 1. 4. 8.

of the people at that city against him, that it was not safe for the apostle to return to it; or he may refer to the opposition he met with at Athens and Corinth, which found him full employment, and prevented his intended journey to them: Whatever was the particular hinderance, he ascribes it to Satan; because persecutors and malicious opposers of truth and righteousness, act by his instigation, and are the great promoters of his interest and kingdom. St. Paul himself calls the false apostle at Corinth, the messenger or angel of Satan: "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, that the angel, the messenger of Satan, might buffet me," 2 Cor. xii. 7. And he elsewhere calls such false apostles in general, the ministers of Satan, 2 Cor. xi. 15. So that "Satan's hindering him," is evidently nothing more, than his being hindered by the opposition of wicked men, who did the work of Satan, and were excited and employed by him. This obstruction the apostle bore with great uneasiness; and no wonder, considering the light in which he viewed these Thessalonians.

TEXT.

Ver. 19, 20. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*

COMMENTARY.

Can you question my affection to you, or the fondness of my desire to return to, and comfort, and establish you? What is my hope? Whence is it I expect my happiness and reward? What is my joy? Whence will all my future satisfaction and pleasure arise? What is my crown of rejoicing? Whence shall I derive that crown of glory, that shall hereafter fill me with triumph and gladness? Is it not from your conversion and constancy in the Christian faith? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Is not your adherence to your Christian profession, under all your afflictions and persecutions, what I now earnestly wish for? Will not my being able to present you blameless and perfect in Christ Jesus, Col. i. 28. before his presence, when he shall hereafter appear with all his saints to judgment, be the substantial proof of my fidelity and diligence, fill my heart with the highest pleasure at this solemnity, and secure me the crown of righteousness from his hand, who is the impartial and universal judge? Yes; you are our glory and our joy. We glory in your conversion and establishment now as the honour of our ministry, we rejoice in you as the seals of our apostleship, and hope that your continuing blameless to the end, will heighten and perfect our joy and triumph at the future appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would just observe, that these words, "In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," may, agreeably with the original words, be either connected as they stand in our translation; "Are not ye our hope, our joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," in the sense I have already explained them; or else the connection may run thus, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Are not even ye?" Even you are our glory and our joy. For the particle *Γαρ*, which we render *for*, should have been translated, *even**: Even you are our glory and our joy.

But it is more worthy our observation, what that glorious image is, which the

* For this use of the particle, see Herod. Hist. i. 1. 8.---5. 3. 12.

apostle here gives us of the time of our blessed Lord's second appearance. Crowns and garlands were worn by the ancients on various occasions; frequently in their entertainments, on their solemn festivals in honour of their gods*, and especially by those who had the honour of a triumph for any signal successes, and who were victors in the ancient games. Those who marched in the triumphal procession wore a crown or garland of laurel, and sometimes of gold: the conquerors in the games were crowned with garlands of parsley, or myrtle, or olive, according to the nature of the games in which they overcame; and in both these instances, the crowns or garlands worn were looked on as tokens of the highest honour, and as marks of the greatest felicity, to which human nature could arrive. Triumphs were attended with a vast concourse and with loud acclamations of the people; and the prize of victory in the games was conferred by the proper judges, amidst the whole assembly of Greeks, and other nations met together to behold these sacred exercises. Now the apostle compares this day of Christ's second appearance, either to the solemnity of a *triumph*, in which he himself should appear with a garland or crown of glory, as the reward of his resolution and courage, of his success and victory, over the superstitious idolatries and vices of mankind, which the numerous converts he had made at Thessalonica, and other places, should appear to do him honour, and acknowledge him under Christ as the instrument of their freedom and salvation, and help to encrease the inward pleasure and gladness of his soul, and heighten the glory of his future triumph: Or else he compares this great day of Christ, with the solemnity of the ancient *games*, in which all those whom he had been instrumental in converting, should meet together in one solemn assembly, to congratulate him for his victories and glorious successes, and to be the noble proofs and instances of them; and in which the Lord Jesus Christ should sit as supreme Judge, and with his own hand adorn him with the garland of victory, and place on his head, as the reward of his resolution and success, a crown infinitely more splendid and honourable, than those who were victors in the ancient games could boast of; even a crown of righteousness and glory, that should never fade away. I know not which of these circumstances the apostle here refers to; whichever of them it is, the day of Christ's appearance could never be painted out in more lively or affecting images; since the earth never beheld more glorious solemnities, than the processions of a triumph, or the pomp and splendor of the ancient games.

Now as the apostle considered the conversion and fidelity of the Thessalonians in this important view, it was no wonder he shewed such eagerness and impatience to revisit them, that he might farther contribute to their establishment in Christianity, which he looked on as of such consequence to his own happiness and glory. And therefore as he was prevented from this visit, by some obstructions thrown in his way, by the wicked and incurable opposition of his enemies, he determined to send Timothy, his companion and fellow-labourer, in some measure to supply his absence. For thus he tells them:

* Vid. *Ælian. V. Hist. iii. 3. 37.*

T E X T.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1, 2, 3. *Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and comfort you concerning your faith; that no man should be moved by these afflictions.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word *σεγυντες*, which we render *forbear*, properly signifies to *cover over* any thing: hence it is used in a metaphorical sense, for suppressing or *concealing any thing**; and particularly for 'suppressing or 'concealing of secrets: and agreeably to this sense the word, as used by the apostle in this verse and the fifth, signifies, 'being no longer able to suppress and conceal the impatience of our desires, to know your circumstances, and confirm you in the faith; which is in part the idea conveyed by the word *forbear* in our version: i. e. 'not being able to restrain ourselves, and to delay inquiring after your state; or rather than remain in so uneasy a situation, fluctuating between hope and fear,' we thought it good, *I chose to be left at Athens alone*; 'I was willing to deprive myself of the assistance and fellowship of Timothy at Athens, and alone to sustain the burthen of that service, and the opposition I there met with, rather than leave you without help and proper support.' When St. Paul went from Berea, Timothy and Silas staid there; Timothy came to him at Athens without Silas, and the apostle chose rather to be left quite alone at Athens, than to neglect his new converts at Thessalonica. And therefore he adds;

I sent Timothy: And to shew his own value and esteem for him, and to give him the greater credit with them, he bestows on him the honourable characters of, *Brother*, as a fellow-christian; and *Minister of God*, he being engaged in the same cause and service of God as the apostle himself was: and whom he therefore farther justly styles *our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ*; the apostle frequently using his ministry and endeavours to carry on and promote this sacred work of the conversion and establishment of others.

For this reason he sent him to the Thessalonians *to establish and comfort † them in their faith*: i. e. 'to confirm them in the faith and doctrine they had embraced, and to exhort them to constancy and perseverance by comforting them under their persecutions for the sake of it.' For thus it follows:

That no man should be moved by these afflictions. The word we render *moved* hath a peculiar signification, and is used in the New Testament only in this place. It properly and originally signifies ‡ the fawning of a dog by shaking his tail, when.

* *Απορητα σεγυν.* *Arcana reservare, sive contēgere*; et *σεγυνος* denotat *tacitum*. *J. Pol. l. v. c. 35. §. 146.* et Hesych. *Σεγυν.* *συνεχει, βαλει, υποκεινται.* *Continet, portat, sustinet.*

† *Παρακαλεσαι* signifies both to exhort and comfort.

‡ Hom. *Odyf. P. v. 1028.* *Ουρη μιν ῥ' οὐ' εσθνε, και βατα καθεαλεν αμφω.*
Ψαζει κυνα κερβερον, ος κερκω σαινων.

Arist. 177. *Ο κυων μιν της οικειας γε και ευπορευτας σαινων και φερων.* *Canis familiaribus quidem et iis qui de ipso bene merentur assentans et custodiens.* *Sext. Empyr. p. 19. l. 2.* *επαιελοντα δε αυτον εκ της δικαστηριου, μελνταιου ουκ ειναι.* *Reverso autem illi e toro Melitensis catellus cauda adulabatur.* *Ælian. V. H. l. 13. c. 42.* *Sic etiam Hesych. Σαινει, κολακνευει, προσηνευεται.*

Pind. Pyth. a. v. 100. *Μιν φιλον κ' τις εων μεγαλανε, εσανεν.* *Ei amico aliquis existens magnanimus est.* *Et Pyth. 2. v. 150.* *σαινων ποτε παντας αγαν παγχυ διαπλεμει.* *Adulans omnes admodum, valde omnia perplexa facit.*

he is pleased ; or the drawing it in when he is angry and afraid. From the former action, the word metaphorically signifies to fawn on and flatter any person : and I think this sense will agree perfectly well with the passage before us, and the meaning of the place will be : that he sent Timothy to comfort them under their afflictions, and to prevent their being fawned and flattered out of their faith and hope by the promises and views of security and other worldly advantages, which their enemies would not fail of using, in order to bend them from their constancy and resolution ; or, if we use the word in a contrary sense, and take the meaning from the contrary action of the dog, in hiding or flinking away his tail through the fear of danger, it will signify ‘ to be disturbed and distressed and shrink from danger.’ And thus the word is interpreted by Hesychius *, to denote the being moved or troubled ; and the sense of the place will be, that the apostle sent Timothy to prevent their running from christianity through fear of danger, and being moved from the constancy of their profession upon account of the persecutions they endured for it. Either of these interpretations convey a sense suitable to the friendly design of St. Paul’s sending Timothy to the Thessalonians ; though I prefer the former, as most agreeable to the usual meaning of the word.

The PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS from this passage are :

I. That those who by any means willingly obstruct the progress and success of the gospel of Christ, and the establishment of others in piety and virtue, and their final salvation, are the ministers of Satan, and no better than instruments employed by him to do his work, and promote his interest and kingdom. This is particularly true of persecutors, who, by violence and cruelty, or any other unrighteous methods oppose the doctrine of salvation, and willingly throw in the way of the faithful ministers of Christ such difficulties, as hinder them in the discharge of their beloved work, and prevent others from receiving the benefit and assistance of their friendly instructions. “ We would have come to you, but Satan hindered us.” Nor is this character less truly applicable to those who, hardened in their own infidelity and vice, endeavour by ridiculing, or falsely representing, or by fallacious arguments undermining the truths of the gospel, to weaken the regard of others to the great principles of religion ; or who, by base insinuations, flattery, solicitations, threats, counsels, or examples, or laying any kind of snares and inducements before others, corrupt their principles or debauch their practice, and thus teach them either to renounce, or counteract the great doctrines and obligations of the gospel of Christ. This is really the height of opposition to the kingdom of God, which consists in knowledge and true righteousness ; and it is becoming in an extremely criminal and dangerous manner, the ministers of, and agents for, the devil.

II. We learn from hence the proper duty of christians, in circumstances of affliction and persecution. They must not suffer themselves to be flattered out of their constancy, by either the delusive and specious promises of bodily ease and worldly prosperity ; nor to be terrified from their adherence to Christ, by the

* *Σαίνεται, κινείται, σαλευεται, ταρατίζεται.* Hesych.

threats and fears of suffering for his name. "That no man should be moved by these afflictions," c. 3. v. 3. Perseverance is the great condition of our christian salvation; and the crown of glory, which we expect as the reward of our constancy, is abundantly sufficient to make us amends for all the difficulties we may meet with in the way to obtain it.

III. We may learn what is the great work and design of the gospel ministry, from the errand and design on which the apostle sent Timothy to the Thessalonians; viz. "to establish and comfort others in their faith." A religious and christian life must have the foundation of proper principles; and the circumstances of christians are often such, as that they need to have proper arguments represented to them to encourage, strengthen, and confirm them: and it is in this work that the gospel ministry should be particularly employed; to preserve those who are immediately under their care, from deserting their principles, and post of duty, by representing to them the substantial evidence of the truths they believe, and guarding them, by proper arguments and motives, by renewed exhortations and friendly encouragements, against the fatal influence of all worldly temptations, whether by flattering their hopes with prospects of advantage, or exciting their fears by the terrors of afflictive evil.

IV. We may learn what it is, that gives the ministers of the gospel in all ages, a proper resemblance to the apostolic character and dignity. The world is full of these kind of claims: but how little oftentimes is there to be seen of true apostles, in those who assume to themselves the apostolic prerogatives and honours! If we would in reality bear any proper resemblance to them, it must be by imitating them in their work, viz. by being fellow-labourers with them in the gospel of Christ. Timothy was truly the brother of the apostle, not merely because of his apostolic ordination; that alone would have been a trifling insignificant ceremony; but because he was a minister of God, underwent the labour, and did the work of a minister, and was the apostle's companion and fellow-servant in this sacred employment, ver. 2. Splendid titles, worldly state, large revenues, regular ordinations, and the claim of special privileges, give no apostolic dignity, nor create any apostolic resemblance. No: it is the generous concern for the honour of God, the constant zeal for the Redeemer's interest, the affectionate concern for the salvation of others, and the unwearied labour to promote it; these are the true marks of an apostolic character, and give a right to part of their respect, even where all the other circumstances are intirely wanting.

V. The apostle here asserts the second appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Are not even ye our hope and joy in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" He is appointed of God his Father to be the universal judge of every man's conduct. He is to determine who is victor in the sacred games of the christian life? who hath overcome in the christian warfare? He is to decide who shall wear the garlands of immortal honours, and appear in the general assembly of angels and saints, with the joyful crown of incorruptible glory. His sentence shall commend the victor's fidelity, constancy, and resolution. His hands shall place the diadem of triumph on the conqueror's brow, and his lips kindly congratulate him on the honours of his success. And in order to this, the day is coming, when the grand solemnity and festival of heaven shall commence, and all the angels of God shall usher in the Saviour on his throne; from whence he shall distribute the

the various rewards which the goodness and mercy of God have prepared for all that persevere in their resolution and constancy to the end. And finally

VI. We may from hence learn, what will be one great foundation of joy and glory to the faithful ministers of Christ, at this glorious and pleasing solemnity. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Even you are our glory and joy." Every one that we are instrumental to convert from the error of his ways, and to bring home and reconcile to God, and to establish in their faith and christian practice, shall be a large addition to our pleasure, and make our crown of glory wear with brighter lustre.

The apostle having declared to the Thessalonians, that the design of his sending Timothy to them, was to establish and comfort them in their christian faith and profession, and to prevent their being either flattered or frightened out of their constancy; mentions himself two very substantial reasons for their continued patience and resolution.

T E X T.

Ver. 3, 4. *For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto; for verily when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word, which we render *appointed*, is, I think, very justly translated, nor do I see any reason to soften away the meaning of it, as I find some interpreters do*; who would fain understand by it nothing more, than what was to come to pass in the natural and ordinary course of things, so as to exclude the positive order and appointment of God. The word is used both in sacred and profane writers to denote something fixed and determined. Thus in St. Luke, ch. ii. 34. Simeon declares of the child Jesus: *He is set, κείται appointed, for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against*, i. e. 'Sent into the world with this fixed purpose and design.' St. Paul says of himself, *I am set, κειμαι appointed, for the defence of the gospel*, Phil. i. 17. i. e. 'appointed by the will and pleasure of God.' The same sense of the word occurs in profane authors†. And there is nothing more certain in the sacred writings, than that christians were really appointed by God to suffer persecution. Thus, *to you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 29. And the apostle Peter, *If when ye do well, ye suffer, and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps*, 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21. Nor is there any thing unworthy of God in such an appointment: he called them out, to be public examples of faith, patience, and constancy; he appointed them to the honour of being martyrs and confessors for the truth, that hereby he might spread the

* Benson.

† See Pind. Ist. a. v. 35. 36. Εφ' ἑκάστῳ ἐργῳ καὶ τέλος. *In quolibet exercitio positus [constitutus] est finis.* Sive, ut Scholiaſtes bene explicat, Τίθεμενος στεφανός. *Proposita fuit corona.*

christian doctrine, approve their fidelity, and render them worthy the crown of victory. And this was a consideration proper to inspire the Thessalonians with courage, when they considered themselves as persons chosen, and called out by God himself to sufferings and persecutions, that they might give their own testimony to the truth and power and excellency of christianity, and become the glorious instruments of propagating it amongst others.

And, agreeable to this appointment and fixed design of God, the apostle, when he was with them, foretold them what they were to expect: he did not flatter them into the belief of christianity, by any fair though delusive promises of worldly advantages and prosperity; but plainly assured them, that persecution would be their certain lot; and appeals to them, that he thus forewarned them: *For even when we were with you, we foretold you, that we should suffer persecution, even as it came to pass: And you know it.* You know that I foretold you, both that I should be persecuted for preaching the gospel to you, and you for embracing it: so that you became christians upon the view of sufferings, and therefore ought not to forsake your christian profession, either on account of my sufferings, or your own.

But yet, as one who knew the frailties and imperfections of human nature, and how liable men are to be overcome by the weight of persecution, the apostle had his fears for these new converts, and could not be free from uneasiness and pain till he had received a full account of their condition and circumstances. And therefore he adds:

T E X T.

Ver. 5. *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

As I saw the persecutions I forewarned you of, actually befalling you, and was myself driven from you by the rage of our enemies, I was no longer able to cover and conceal my impatience of being acquainted with your behaviour; and therefore *I sent Timothy to know your faith*; to inquire into your constancy, and see if you remained faithful in your

christian profession. The word *faith* plainly here signifies *fidelity*; or, as the apostle expresses it, ver. 8. *standing fast in the Lord*. He sent to know whether they adhered to the religion they had embraced, or had been tempted and prevailed with by their persecutions to desert it: and in this sense the word $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ is frequently used in the New Testament, and by the best writers. Thus the apostle uses it, ver. 7. *We were comforted by your faith*, i. e. 'your fidelity and constancy.' By profane * authors it is frequently used to signify the fidelity of subjects to their prince, and the fidelity of one man to another in the performance of his promises; and should have been rendered in the place before us, by *fidelity* or *constancy*; for it was this that the apostle was solicitous and in pain about:

For he was afraid *lest the tempter should have tempted them, and so his labour should have been in vain.*

The word, we render *tempter*, signifies properly, one that solicits and persuades another to a criminal action, by whatsoever methods it may be: and this sense of

* Herod. l. 3. c. 2. § 8.

it is not peculiar to the sacred writers, but to be found in others * of unquestionable authority; and this is the meaning of it in the place before us, *Lest the tempter should have tempted you*, i. e. 'lest he, who by persecution endeavours to seduce and terrify you from your christian profession, should have prevailed against you so far as to render our labour in your conversion intirely in vain, i. e. should have tempted you with success, and induced you to renounce and forsake your christian principles and worship.' For had this been the case, the apostle's labour amongst them would have been rendered wholly empty and fruitless: By the "tempter" here may be understood, either their persecutors, who by their violence and malice endeavoured to tempt and draw them from their christian profession; or rather he, who by way of eminence is called 'the tempter,' viz. the devil, who is the great seducer of mankind into evil, and who, by the flatteries and terrors of the world, strives to draw men from constancy in religion and virtue. The temptation that the apostle here refers to, is evidently that which arises from persecution, and not any inward suggestions of the mind, abstracted from this, which he may be supposed to be author of; and he is said to tempt men by persecutions, because they are in their nature strong inducements to forsake the open profession of christianity, and because persecution is eminently his work, carried on at his instigation, and by his agents, and one of the most effectual methods he makes use of, to support his own kingdom of ignorance, superstition, and vice. Fearing therefore lest this temptation might have been too successful with the Thessalonians, and impatient to know the consequences, he sends Timothy to learn their circumstances, and give him the proper informations concerning them.

But what was the apostle's pleasure, how high his satisfaction, when Timothy brought him the welcome news of their fidelity and perseverance!

T E X T.

Ver. 6, 7, 8. *But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you; therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

This agreeable report at once put an end to all his fears on their behalf, and assured him, that the effects of his labour amongst them were not lost, but that the tempter had tempted them in vain! Timothy brought him the glad message of three circumstances, that could not but be extremely grateful and pleasing to him, viz. of their fidelity in their christian profession; of their mutual charity and love to each other, and all the brethren in Macedonia; and that they maintained a kind and affectionate remembrance of himself: and as the proof of this, that they were as eagerly desirous to see him, as he could be of seeing them. They who interpret the word *charity* †, of their love

* Dionys. Hal. p. 676. l. 14. 17. Thucyd. p. 380. l. ii. 5. Lyf. p. 7. fin. Herod. i. 6. 2. El. V. H. 1. 4.

† Benson.

to the apostle and the gospel, lose this agreeable circumstance, of their mutual affection to each other, and all the christian converts of that country and province, for which they were remarkable. *Ye yourselves are taught of God, says he, to love one another; and indeed ye do it towards the brethren that are in Macedonia:* a thing of too great moment to be omitted, in the account he gave of Timothy's report concerning them; especially as their love to the gospel was comprehended in their "fidelity," and their affection to the apostle, in their "kind remembrance of him:" For this is the meaning of the word *μνησιν*, viz. *remembrance*. They had the most friendly and grateful, and affectionate remembrance of him, as the instrument of their conversion to God; and this appeared not only by their making mention of him, but by their being greatly desirous *ἐπιποθόντες*, *ardently longing* to see him, yea as earnestly desirous of it, as he could be of seeing them: for the words, *as we also are to see you*, was part of Timothy's report; who assured the apostle, that their affectionate remembrance of him was such, as that they had as warm and passionate a fondness for seeing him, as he could have for seeing them. A noble argument this of their esteem for christianity, and what must afford the apostle a very sensible pleasure, as it gave him a reasonable ground of hope of their continued steadfastness and perseverance.

Therefore, adds the apostle, *we were comforted † over you, or, upon your account*, by the good report we received of you, *in all our affliction and distress*, 'under the persecution we suffered from our enemies, and in the straits and necessities to which we were reduced.' The word, we render *distress*, signifies a ‡ necessity and pressure of any kind, but particularly the distress of poverty; and this seems to be the peculiar meaning of the word in this place. For the apostle being driven from place to place, where he had neither acquaintance nor friends, must be oftentimes reduced to extreme necessity and want: but under all these distresses he was comforted concerning them *by their faith*; by means of and through their continued faith and constancy. The Hebraism that some persons § complain of here in the word *παρεκληθημεν*, *we were comforted*, is without any shadow of foundation; the word being regularly passive, though contracted according to the usual form of it, and borrows no signification from any Hebrew idiom or word whatsoever. Neither is there any reason for the observation from Grotius||, that is here taken notice of, of a transposition of the words of this sentence; the whole being according to the usual manner of the Greek language, without any difficulty or disorder in the construction, or confusion of the sense. I should not take notice of these minute circumstances so often, but that I think it an indignity to the sacred writings, to be thus perpetually loading them with improprieties and transpositions.

One cannot well omit to observe the generous spirit of this great apostle, who thus despised his own sufferings for the welfare and advantage of others, and thought himself abundantly recompensed for all his pains and difficulties, by the steadfastness and perseverance of those he had converted, and who could rejoice and triumph in the midst of all his necessities and wants on account of the prosperity of

† Εφ' υμῖν.

‡ Τας εκ Θεων αναγκας θνητον δει φέρειν. Eurip. Επικυφισαι τῆς πενιας την αναγκην. Ælian. V. Hist. l. 14. c. 24.

§ Benson.

|| Idem.

others ! How moving, how elegant is his language ! “ *Now we LIVE, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*” *We live*, i. e. ‘we enjoy life, we have the highest satisfaction and pleasure of life ; in which sense the word is emphatically used by Hebrew, Greek *, and Latin † writers : as though life itself would have been no blessing or pleasure to the apostle, if they had not *stood fast in the Lord*. The original word, which we render *stand fast*, is a military term, and denotes a vigorous, resolute, and steady opposition to an enemy ; the maintaining and standing our ground, without deserting our post, or shrinking from danger : and this is the meaning of *standing in the Lord*, viz. maintaining their christian resolution, their being unmoved by their sufferings for Christ, and determined at all adventures never to yield the victory to their enemies. Their being thus determined as christians, was life to him in the midst of death ; it was plenty in all the straits of poverty ; it was his rejoicing and support under all his distresses ; and esteemed by him so signal a favour and blessing to himself, as to occasion his most grateful acknowledgments to God. For thus it immediately follows :

T E X T.

Ver. 9, 10. *For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes, before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The first part of this paragraph might, I think, have been rendered in a much more lively and affectionate manner : *What thanks are we able to render unto God on your account, in return for all that joy with which we rejoyce for your sakes before God !* For this is the proper sense of the word, *ανταποδεναι*, which we translate, *render again*, viz. to give something in return, requital, and as an acknowledgment of a favour received ; and the words, *for you ‡*, signify, *on your account*. The good tidings he had received of their fidelity, and charity to one another, gave him so strong a pleasure *before God*, i. e. when he mentioned it in his most solemn addresses to him, that he declares himself incapable of making any return or acknowledgment, that could be worthy of, and suitable to, so great a favour. *What thanks are we able to render unto God ?* The interrogation encreases the vehemency and warmth of the sentiment, and is the strongest way of declaring our apprehension of any thing to be impossible.

And as his satisfaction from Timothy’s report was so very high, so it made him more eagerly desirous of actually seeing them himself in person : and therefore as it gave him occasion of grateful acknowledgments to God, so it doubled his earnestness in prayer that he might obtain this favour : for this is the apostle’s language : *Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face.* It is a poor

* Τηδε ημερα κριθησεται ειτ’ εστι επι ζων, ειτ’ απολωλ’ Ευριπιδης. Arist. Θεομ. v. 83. Εσα συν Αχιλλει μορος. Pind. Ol. 3. v. 109. Στην δε μαλ’ εγγυς εων, και ακοντισι δαρι φαινω. Hom. Il. 3. v. 496.

† *Conser-vi, conser-væque omnes, bene valete, et vivite.* Plaut. Mil. 4. 8. 38. *Vivamus, Mea Lesbia, atque amemus.* Catul. 5. 1. *Vestros patres vivere arbitror, et eam quidem vitam, quæ est sola vita nominanda.* Cicer. de Senect. c. 21.

‡ *περι υμων. De vobis.* Thus, *εδεν αυτω περι επιθεσεως της αρχης ανακοινεται.* “She communicated nothing to him concerning the affair of seizing the empire.” Herod. l. i. c. 8. § 9.

observation

observation that is made here from Le Clerc *, and which it is acknowledged cannot be made without disturbing the natural order of the sentence, that the words we render *exceedingly*, signify *over and above*; as though the meaning of the prayer was, 'that to this joyful news of your fidelity, God would over and above add this favour, that I may be permitted to see you.' For the phrase is used but three times in the New Testament, and in none of these places signifies, *over and above*, or 'something that is additional,' but is constantly used to express the highest degree of any thing. Thus, Eph. iii. 20. *To him who is able to do for us*, υπερ εκ περισσοῦ, *exceeding abundantly*, as we rightly render it, *above all that we can ask or think*. And in this very epistle, 1 Theff. v. 13. *Esteem them that are over you in the Lord very highly in love*, much more abundantly than you do others, *for their work's sake*. The other sense of the word would convey no meaning in these places, or a very imperfect and low one; whereas St. Paul writes with fire and great vehemence, and makes use of words that convey the strongest and warmest images to the mind, and fill the imagination and judgment with ideas and sentiments of the sublimest kind. Thus his gratitude to God for their fidelity, during his absence, was stronger than he was able to express; and he prayed with more exceeding abundant earnestness that God would permit him to re-visit them, and that night and day; in order

To perfect that which was lacking in their faith. It is an imagination of some interpreters †, that when the apostles first planted a church, they taught them only the plain and fundamental articles of christianity, and the necessity of repentance and new obedience; and when the converts had digested these, then they instructed them in the more minute doctrines of christianity: but I think this is a mistaken observation, nor do I well comprehend which of the real articles of christianity are properly minute; I would hope no articles of the christian doctrine deserve this character. The true meaning of the Greek expression is, 'those things which are yet wanting towards your fidelity:' their constancy in the faith had not yet attained its full establishment and support; not that they had received but an imperfect knowledge of christianity from the apostle, but because there was yet something wanting to confirm them in the faith they had embraced, which even Timothy could not supply in the apostle's absence, and which therefore the apostle was impatient to see them again, in order to perfect. And what these things were, Grotius hath with great judgment pointed out, by a like instance in the Romans, whom the apostle also longed to see, that he *might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end they might be established, and that they might be comforted together by their mutual faith*, Rom. i. 11. the very sentiment in the passage before us. The apostle had been long enough at Thessalonica to convert great numbers to the christian faith, and I suppose that he preached to them, both all those essential and all those minute doctrines, which it was necessary for them to know; but he was driven from them by persecution, before he had conferred any spiritual gifts, at least in that abundance which they needed, and upon many of those that he had converted; and for this reason he earnestly prayed God, that he might be permitted to re-visit them, that he might καταρτισαι 'perfect, repair, and thoroughly amend and fully make up' υπερηματα πηγῶς the deficiencies of

* Benson.

† Idem.

their faith, i. e. those things which were yet remaining and wanting to confirm and establish them in their christian fidelity and profession.* For though their faith, as that implied their belief of all the necessary doctrines of Christianity*, was absolutely compleat, and needed no amendment or addition; yet as faith implies constancy and fidelity in the christian doctrine, there was something still wanting, which Timothy could not make up, which needed the apostle's personal presence to supply; and which therefore must be conferring the gifts of the Spirit, either on greater numbers of them, or in a larger abundance than was done, when he was first present with them: Or he might refer to those moral precepts of righteousness, which he gives them in the third and last part of this letter, and in which he had not time particularly to instruct them, upon account of his being so suddenly driven from them, by the violence of the persecution raised against him, and which was necessary to their establishment in their christian profession. Though this seems not so probable, from verses 1, 2, of chap. iv. And therefore he concludes this part of his epistle with a solemn prayer to God for himself and them.

T E X T.

Ver. 11, 12, 13. *Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you: and the Lord make you to encrease and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you, to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

indefectible source of all good; and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediatorial, secondary source, the Father's eternal repository of good, in whom *it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell*; and in and by whom he enriches the whole rational creation, and especially his own church on earth, with all blessings necessary to their establishment and comfort.

The prayer itself relates first to the subject he had been treating of, 'his desire of seeing the Thessalonians.' *May God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you!* The word we render, *direct**, signifies properly *to make strait*. Thus it is used by the Seventy, in the same construction as here by St. Paul. *Make thy way strait before my face*†. And because strait paths are easy to find, hence it figuratively signifies to direct and prepare, and remove all impediments and obstructions. So that the meaning is, that God and Christ would remove every thing that hindered the apostle's journey to them, and so order things, that he might come to them as easily and certainly, as though he were walking in

C O M M E N T A R Y.

A solemn and important prayer! worthy an apostle, and an holy man inspired of God! breathing the most affectionate concern for them, and the noblest charity towards all mankind; and which we cannot read with seriousness and care, without feeling the benevolent principle warming our breasts, and sentiments of real piety affecting and moving every passion of the soul.

The prayer is directed, with great propriety and dignity, to *God and our Father*, or, as the words should be rendered in the latter part of the paragraph, *God even our Father*; who is, in the constant language of the New Testament, styled *God* peculiarly and emphatically; and who is the original, eternal, supreme, and

* κατευθύναι.

† Ps. 5. 8. κατευθύνου ενόπιον σου την οδόν μου. See Ps. 119. 5.

an open strait path, without interruption or doubt; God by his providence, and Christ by the direction and secret suggestions of his Spirit.

His prayer for the Thessalonians is more extensive. *May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you!* The *Lord*, here, unquestionably signifies Christ: and the prayer is with great propriety addressed to him; because he had so loved them all, so loved the whole world, as to give himself as a propitiation for their sins; because the fruit of his Spirit is *love, joy, and peace*; because their hope of the common salvation was owing to him; and finally, because they all waited for his second appearance, to receive from him the promised reward.

The blessing requested for them is, that they might *be made to increase and abound in love one towards another*, as members of the same body, as partakers of the same privileges, and as heirs of the same eternal glory; as subjects of the same kingdom, as brethren of the same family, and as children of the same father; and therefore animated by one and the same kind and friendly spirit, it would be strange that persons, united by so many ties, should be destitute of mutual affection.

But doth christianity confine our love to our brethren in Christ? No. *The Lord make you to abound in love one towards another, and "towards all men!"* The first affection due from them, was to one another, as brethren and friends; but christianity teaches, and the love of God and Christ inspires, a more diffusive charity, even charity to all men, to human nature as such, yea, to our very enemies, and those that persecute and hate us. And it is by this noble and universal love that the law of nature and nations must be supported, and civil government itself preserved in order and security.

But what kind of love is here recommended? *The Lord make you to abound in love towards one another, and towards all men, "even as we do" towards you.* How did *he* love them, and what were the proofs of his love? He loved them as a father did his children, as a suckling mother her infant at her breast, so as to be solicitous and intent upon promoting their salvation, so as to be content to be persecuted, and live in perpetual straits to do them good; yea, so as to give up his life, if that were necessary, to secure their constancy and happiness. Generous apostle! how like the master he served! how warm the benevolence that possessed him! It is thus, christians, you should love one another; it is with this spirit you should love the whole family of mankind, always wishing their best interest, always ready and prepared to promote it.

But what was the motive he set before them, to increase in them this benevolent and generous disposition? Why, that *their hearts might be established unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father.* The perfection of christian love is the perfection of holiness; for *love is the fulfilling of the law.* To be established in the exercise of this sacred disposition will make us appear without spot or blemish in the presence of God our Father. For the heart that is purified by love, is purified from all unworthy and criminal passions, and hath the very temper of heaven formed and prevalent in it. Such are fit to appear before the God of love, and to be presented by him, as objects worthy his regard, and perfected in holiness, by him, whose love to men was even stronger than death.

Oh! how high the honour, cloathed with this amiable and sacred ornament, to be presented by the Son of God before his eternal Father, especially at *the second appearance*

appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he shall come to the universal judgment of the world! To be then separated from the partial, selfish part of mankind, in whom the governing principle and view is their own advantage, who live in envy, hatred, and malice, and know not the pleasures of the kind, the friendly, and benevolent spirit: to be, I say, separated from them in the judgment-day, and set before the presence of the God of love, as persons transformed, by the prevalence of an universal charity, into his own most glorious and amiable image! this will be an honour truly substantial, and open the soul to receive immortal pleasure.

Especially when we add the last circumstance mentioned by the apostle, to warm the hearts of the Thessalonian converts, viz. that at this coming of Christ *he shall appear with all his saints*, i. e. ἁγίων, for the word signifies both, 'with the angels of heaven, and the entire number of pious and virtuous persons that have lived from the beginning to the end of the world, whose hearts have been purified by that faith in God which works by love.' How truly glorious will that assembly be! constituted of the flower of God's creation, and by their fixed disposition fitted for eternal harmony and peace! It is amongst these, that the apostle puts his Thessalonians in mind, they should appear at the second coming of Christ, if they were found established in holiness and love. The very thought of such a society inspires a desire of being one of the blessed number; and there cannot well be a stronger motive to cultivate that universal benevolence and charity, which the apostle here recommends, than those circumstances which are here put together, and which I think no other sentiment can well heighten, viz. that this perpetual increase in love to all men, is the very perfection of an unblameable holiness; that it shall be acknowledged as such by Christ at his second coming; that it shall fit us to appear in the blessed society of his angels and saints; and that he shall then present us with them, as persons without blemish or spot, before the presence of the eternal God, to receive that solemn and final approbation, which shall secure us the possession of eternal life and blessedness.

On the whole, I think no passage can breathe a nobler spirit, nor be more crowded with lively and sublime imaginations: and therefore I shall repeat it once more, as my sincere and affectionate prayer for every one of my readers. *May God himself, even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, make you to increase and abound in love one towards another and towards all men, to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness, before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

The practical uses, and doctrinal observations from this portion of scripture are such as these:

1. The Father is here eminently styled *God*, and that twice in a very short paragraph. "Now God himself, even our Father," as it should have been rendered, verse 11. "direct our way to you;" and as the same words are rendered, ver. 13. "to establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father." And this propriety is uniformly observed throughout St. Paul's writings, and indeed throughout all the writings of the New Testament. And there is nothing more evident, to any who read with tolerable care and observation, than that, whatever communication of perfections there is between the Father and Son, and whatever be the manner in which the Son derives his nature and fulness from the Father; yet they are always invariably represented under those two very distinct characters; the Father, as eminently God, the original and source of all perfection,

fection, laying the scheme of redemption, and sending his son both to reveal and accomplish it; and the Son, as the one only Mediator, and to the glory of his eternal Father, as invested with the mediatorial kingdom by his power, and governing it in subserviency to the purposes of his wisdom and mercy. And these are the two characters that are to direct and determine our duty to each, and which are more easily understood by plain and honest christians, than any philosophical questions, which those who debate them know they cannot explain, and which, for that reason, I imagine others will never be able to understand.

2. As the Father sustains this character of *God*, in an eminent and peculiar manner, all our prayers and thanksgivings, on account of the blessings we want or receive, are ultimately to terminate in, and be directed to, him. "What thanks can we render to God on your account, for the joy wherewith we joy before God?" verse 9. And again, "Now God himself, even our Father, direct our way to you," verse 11. "That you may be established in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of Christ," verse 13. And indeed this is a truth so plain, and so universally acknowledged, that whatever disputes there may be amongst christians, about the nature and personality, the union and distinction of the persons in God, yet they all seem to center in this, as an acknowledged point, to address directly the Father, as the ultimate object, by the Son as Mediator. This is observable, as well in all the established forms of worship in the christian churches, as in the services of those, whose method is more open and unconfined; there being no persons that I know of, who ultimately address the Son by the Father, nor any christian churches that would allow or endure such an alteration and corruption of the christian doctrine and worship. And there is this satisfaction that I have amidst all our differences on these subjects in speculation, that they seldom or never, amongst wise and sober persons, distract or disorder the solemn prayers or thanksgivings which are offered in the house and church of God; but the rule here is almost universally one, the worship of one God, even the Father, by the mediation of the Son, through the assistance and influence of the one good Spirit. However,

3. It is plain from this paragraph of scripture, that Christ is to be addressed, according to the apostolic example and practice, and that on very solemn and important occasions. St. Paul prays, "May God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you," verse 11. which is a direct and immediate address to him, that he would so order affairs, as that the apostle might have a speedy and safe journey to them; and by consequence supposes, that the affairs on which this depended were properly subject to his direction and management. And the prayer to Christ that follows this, is yet of more and higher importance. "And may the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another," verse 12. a wish, or prayer, that would be both impertinent and trifling, if this was a blessing that had no dependence on his influence and concurrence; for it is to be observed, that it is not a desire that they might abound in love, by attending to those motives and principles of the gospel revelation, that have a tendency to promote this sacred disposition; but that the Lord, that Christ himself would cause them to increase in love; a desire, that must be absolutely unreasonable, but upon the supposition that Christ may and ought to be addressed to; and that this is a blessing which may be expected from him in answer to our prayers. Nor do I see any difficulty in forming a distinct and clear perception in this affair. The monarchy and sovereign empire of the whole creation is ultimately

and absolutely in God, and all the benefits that mankind share, are originally from him. But yet God is pleased to communicate them by a great variety of means and instruments, all of which act in and by him, according to the respective powers and abilities he hath conferred on them. "In Christ it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; the fulness of the Godhead bodily," or substantially; by whom he upholds all things, and whom he hath constituted head over all things to his church, which is his body, and therefore as truly under his influence and conduct, as the natural body is under its proper head, or a political body, kingdom or state, under its proper governor and lord. Now, as "Christ is the head over all things to the church," so, as the apostle expressly declares, 1 Cor. xi. 3. "the head of Christ is God;" therefore the same blessing comes from God, as the great original and source of all good; and from the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Mediator and conveyer of the benefits and favours both of providence and grace; and thus it is with perfect consistence and reason that the apostle doth, and we in imitation of him may ask the same spiritual and temporal blessings from "God, even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." From the Father, according to his nature and distinguishing character, as first in rank, order, and dignity; and from Christ, appointed of the Father, according to the original fitness of things, to be the great medium and instrument of conveyance and communication. I will only add on this article, that whatever may be the specific nature of Christ, considered under his original, glorious character, as the Word of God, whatever the manner of his generation or production from the Father, ("and who is there that can declare his generation?") yet by us he is always to be considered as the Word made flesh, as Jesus Christ in all things made like to us, sin only excepted, and as the one only Lord, whom the Father hath appointed to the important work of men's salvation.—But thus much as to the distinguishing characters of "God, even the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ," and the special reasons of praying to them.

Concerning the Nature of PRAYER itself, we may observe:

1. That the blessings we are to ask for, relate to the present and future life; and that, as our happiness and comfort for body and soul depend on the disposals of God's providence, and the kind influences of his grace, we are to pray for the conduct of the one, and the constant influences of the other. In this we have the reason of the thing itself to support us, and the practice of the apostle to warrant us. He prayed continually that he might "see the Thessalonians face to face, and that God himself, even the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, would direct his way to them," "give him the opportunity of re-visiting them, and remove every obstruction that might prevent him," verses 10, 11. hereby plainly declaring, that even these common events are subject to the providence of God, and that the favourable disposal of them is necessary to the accomplishment even of our wise and benevolent desires. And as the events even of common life are not now less subject to the divine controul than they formerly were, prayer to God and Christ to direct our way, and that we may order all our affairs with prudence and success, is both our interest and duty. These indeed are of a lesser concern, in comparison of the affairs relating to our salvation. These also have a dependence on God; and therefore the apostle prays, that the Lord would make them to increase and abound in love towards one another, and towards all men, that their hearts might be established unblameable in holiness,

verses

verses 12, 13. And indeed what petition more suitable to the God of love, than that, in imitation of himself, he would influence us to a more extensive and fervent charity? What request can we offer more acceptably, or with surer hope of success, to a Being of infinite rectitude and purity of mind, than the establishment of our hearts in holiness? Such a prayer to the holy One of God will not fail of being favourably received and regarded.

2. Prayer should be offered up to God, "even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," both for ourselves and others. For himself, the apostle prays, "that God would direct his way to them;" and for them, "that God would increase their love, and establish their hearts unblameable in holiness," verses 11, 12, 13. Christianity inspires a generosity of temper, fills men with a warm regard for the present and future happiness of others, and allows them the privilege of offering the spiritual sacrifice of prayer for themselves and all men.

3. Prayer should be constant and affectionate. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face," verse 10. As our dependence on God is perpetual, every moment of our lives, the acknowledgment of this our dependence should be habitual; and as prayer is the solemn profession of our dependent state, we ought always to be ready and disposed for it, and make it part of our daily employment; and as the blessings we pray for are of the greatest consequence and value, our supplications should be attended with a warmth and fervency, which bears some proportion to the worth and excellence of the blessings we ask. And,

4. Our prayers should always be attended with suitable thanksgivings. The holy apostle praises, and prays to God in the same breath. "What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy with which we joy for your sakes before God? night and day praying exceedingly, that we might perfect that which is lacking in the faith," verses 9, 10. Gratitude for past favours is the natural disposition with which men should ask of God future ones; nor is there any thing more becoming us, than that, when we pray to God for any blessings we want, we should express our thankfulness for those we have. Nor should we confine our praises to God merely for the personal blessings we receive at his hands, but enter as well into the blessings as the afflictions of others, and make mention of their mercies, as well as of our own, with the sincerest pleasure and gratitude to God, and pray for the continual increase of them, with the most friendly and benevolent disposition. These are the rules with respect to prayer.

AS TO PERSECUTION and TEMPTATION, observe,

1. That it is one great argument of support under them, that God hath in the course of his providence appointed us to endure them. "Yourself know that we are appointed thereto," verse 3. Sufferings for righteousness sake, though they proceed from the wickedness of men, and are the effects of their malice and enmity to truth and righteousness, yet are to be considered as the permissions of divine providence; and whenever they happen, those who are injured by them ought to look upon themselves as appointed and called out of God, to endure them with courage and constancy; to give this testimony to the truth of their profession, and the excellence of christianity; to become more conformed unto Christ their head; that so the equity and mercy of God may hereafter appear, in the peculiar and distinguishing rewards that shall be conferred on them. Sufferings of this kind are not merely accidental and casual, at least in respect to those who are subject to them; but it is the will and fixed decree of

God that they shall endure them, for very wise and valuable purposes; a consideration that carries in it encouragement and support, both as it lays a real and solid foundation for their expecting all necessary supports under them, and a suitable recompence for their patiently enduring them.

2. That the best of men, in times of persecution and temptation, are in circumstances of danger, and liable to be seduced from their fidelity and steadfastness by the tempter. "I sent to know your faith," saith the apostle, "lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, so that our labour be in vain;" i. e. 'so tempted them, as to have seduced or terrified them out of their christian profession.' In the beginning of the epistle, chap. i. ver. 4. he tells them, he knew, and was fully assured of their election of God; and yet here he intimates to them his fear, lest all his labour in converting them should be in vain, either by their being flattered out of their constancy by promises and hopes of worldly advantages, or terrified out of it, by the weight and grievousness of their sufferings. And indeed this apprehension of the apostle was founded on experience, and a just sense of the weakness and imperfection of human nature. He had not that confident persuasion of his own standing, with all his peculiar advantages, as wholly to set him above fear, and make him negligent in his endeavours for his own security, 1 Cor. ix. 27. but was forced to keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away, *αδοξίμος*; the original word signifies, 'one disapproved, and finally rejected of God.' And I think it is not to be imagined, that these Thessalonians had any greater security than the apostle, or that they could be more out of danger from the influence and power of temptation than he was. The truth is, that Christianity, in its principles and promises, is abundantly sufficient to support us all under the various temptations of life that may befall us; and that the perseverance of that christian is secure and certain, who rightly improves the means and advantages of his own salvation. But, as human nature is feeble and defective in itself, and no one can, in the nature of things, be sure how he shall act in any future given circumstances; and as we are by our passions and affections liable to be ensnared by the flatteries of the world, and overcome by the terrors of it; so no man can be said to be absolutely sure of the event, or out of all danger from the temptations of life that encompass him, till his work is done, and his course is finished, and by being removed out of all farther temptation, he is immutably fixed in happiness and glory: and that whatever may be the secret purposes of God, no christian can depend upon his election, that it shall at all events prevent his being overcome by temptation, any farther than he takes care to make it sure, by "working out his own salvation with fear and trembling." Every other kind of security is really presumption, which is inconsistent with the very frame and circumstances of mankind, and with the settled constitution of the gospel of Christ. But,

3. The compliance with the temptations of life, and being seduced or terrified from our fidelity to God and Christ, renders all the gospel methods of salvation ineffectual and vain. "Lest by some means the tempter should have tempted you, and our labour be in vain," ver. 5. The apostle had been greatly successful in their conversion; but as he was in pain for their perseverance, he was afraid lest all that labour should be finally lost: And if we give way to the temptations of life, and suffer ourselves to be overcome and ensnared by them, whatever may have been the good effects which the means of salvation may once have

have had on us, all becomes wholly fruitless and ineffectual, the moment we give up our faith and constancy, and yield ourselves to the habitual power and influence of any kind of temptations whatsoever.—But this leads to another distinct subject of discourse, taught by the apostle, viz.

FIDELITY and PERSEVERANCE in our christian profession.

And with respect to this article observe,

1. That constancy and perseverance in true religion is the great condition of the gospel salvation. “Now,” saith the apostle, “we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord,” verse 8. And “may the Lord make you to abound in love, in order to establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father,” verse 13. “The just person,” saith the author to the Hebrews, chap. x. ver. 38. “shall live by faith; but if any man,” it should have been rendered, (the words *any man* not being in the original) “but if he,” viz. the just man, “draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” It is not enough that we are once converted, that we have begun well in the christian course and life; we must stand in the Lord, keep our ground, and maintain our constancy to the end of life, and be established in christian piety and virtue, in opposition to all the most powerful snares and temptations of life whatsoever; or else we shall fail of the grace of God, and finally miss of our reward.

2. That the establishment of christians in those two capital graces of the christian temper and life, viz. *faith* and *charity*, is the surest evidence of the sincerity of their profession, and of the due influence of the gospel means of salvation upon them. “When Timothy brought us good tidings of your *faith* and *charity*, we were comforted over you in all our affliction,” verses 6, 7. We then knew that the tempter had not tempted you, and that our labour was far from being in vain. *Faith*, as implying continuance in, and adherence to the gospel doctrine and principles, and *charity*, an universal and habitual benevolence, upon the foundation, and as the effect of such a faith, are the two grand distinguishing articles of christianity, and wherever they prevail must be productive of, and attended with, every other amiable disposition of temper, and virtue of human life. And therefore wherever the gospel produces these graces, and preserves them alive, and in constant vigour and exercise, it is the noblest and surest evidence that it hath had its genuine effect on us, and the consciousness of it may justly fill us with the most cheerful hope of appearing with joy and confidence even before God himself, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

3. The steadfastness of christians in their faith and charity, and their habitual and firm constancy under the temptations of life, gives the highest pleasure and satisfaction of mind to all the faithful ministers of Christ, supports them under all the difficulties of their service, and occasions their constant rejoicings and thanksgivings before God. How deeply sensible was our apostle of this sacred and benevolent pleasure! How warm were his thanksgivings to God for the satisfaction he had in their fidelity! “When Timothy brought us the good tidings of your faith and charity, we were comforted concerning you in all our affliction and distress. “Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. What thanks can we render to God on your account, for the joy wherewith we joy before God for your sakes!” verses 6, 7, 8, 9. And though there are some who engage in the gospel ministry, out of merely worldly views, with a cloke of covetousness, and for their secular advantages; yet surely where the principal and governing view is to promote the kingdom

kingdom of God and Christ, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness: no pleasure can be stronger, than when they see their prayers, their wishes, and labours effectual for these purposes, and they find themselves honoured of God, succeeded in their endeavours to promote the conversion and establishment of others.

Another OBSERVATION from this passage is:

That true faith is always productive of charity. They are sister graces, and inseparable companions. True faith invariably works by love, and the most extensive and affectionate charity is produced by the christian faith. A defect in either is a defect in christian piety or virtue: a total failure in either is a real forfeiture of the christian character. This was the apostle's comfort, and the Thessalonians commendation, "that Timothy bare witness to their faith and charity."

I cannot help making another observation from this passage, which is naturally pointed out by the apostle, viz.

That there is a grateful respect, and affectionate remembrance due to those who are, under God, the instruments of our conversion and establishment in the christian faith and charity. "When Timothy brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always," verse 6. viz. as the instrument under God of bringing you to the acknowledgment of the truth in Christ. It is not to be wondered, that the enemies of christianity, and such as are incurably vicious, should despise both our persons and characters: such contempt will, I hope, always be esteemed by us a real honour. But if we prove the happy occasions of increasing men's knowledge in the things of God, of bringing them to sober and serious reflections, of helping forward their repentance and conversion, and of fixing them in the principles and resolutions of christian piety and virtue, I had almost said, let them despise us if they can. May I not truly say to such as the apostle to Philemon, verse 19. "You owe unto us even your own selves;" and presume that such an obligation will not easily or soon be forgotten? Oh that these motives of affection, at least to our office and service, were more universal and constant!

With regard to CHRISTIAN CHARITY, observe,

1. That it consists in a strong complacency and satisfaction in the happiness of others; or in that habitual benevolence of mind towards them, which causes us to wish their entire prosperity, and disposes us as far as we can to promote it. How powerful was this temper in the apostle, which rendered him fit to preach the gospel of reconciliation and peace, and a disciple worthy of the blessed and compassionate master that he served! His charity and benevolence was such, as made him rejoice in all their happiness, pray earnestly for the continuance and increase of it, and recompensed him for, and made him almost forget the persecutions, straits, and difficulties he laboured under, verses 7, 8, 9. "He *lived* and was happy, if they stood fast in the Lord." Oh how worthy is this warm benevolence of temper to be cultivated by all christians, who have such an example of it in God, the best of all beings, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, who in this, as well as in other instances, is the express image of his Father's person and glory!

2. True christian charity is universal, and extends to all mankind. "The Lord make you to increase, and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men," verse 12. Christianity opens and enlarges the heart towards the whole

whole family of mankind, and renders their affectionate concern as extensive as human nature itself. It scorns to be confined to sects and parties, to principles or opinions, to churches and congregations, or to kingdoms and nations. It embraces all without exception; and though it hath its peculiar and favourite objects, yet it is diffusive as the face of the earth, and large as the numerous families that dwell on it. It is an holy flame, kindled by the love of God and Christ, partakes of the nature of its divine original, and, like that, is universal, as well as

3. Affectionate and warm. The apostle proposes his love to them, as the pattern of their love to one another, and to all men, verse 12. And his, we have seen, was as tender as that of a father to his children, or a nursing mother to the infant at her breast; to teach us that our universal charity should be unfeigned and sincere, disinterested and generous, fervent and strong, operative and effectual, and finally manifested in all suitable and worthy effects, without grudging or reluctance. And,

4. That we should labour continually to cultivate and improve this sacred disposition, and to carry it on to still higher degrees of perfection, by endeavouring to root out of our minds every thing of a contracted, selfish, sordid nature; every disposition and tendency to anger, passion, envy, malice, and revenge, and all those principles that are inconsistent with benignity and friendliness, and enemies to the most cordial union of christians with themselves, and with all mankind. Oh! how amiable is religion, when it thus cures mankind of these unworthy and hateful distempers of mind, and causes men perpetually to grow in that goodness and sweetness of temper that forms us into the most lovely resemblance we can bear even to the best of beings! Let us remember,

5. That it is this continual increase and perfection of charity, that must constitute us "unblameable in holiness before God, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." For this is the connection of the apostle's words, "May the Lord make you to abound in love, to the end," or in order "to establish your hearts unblameable in holiness, before God, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And the truth is, that an unblameable holiness is inseparable from the prevalence and due increase of christian charity. For the great occasion of all the vices of mankind is a narrow, selfish spirit, by which they are prompted to seek after pleasures, gratifications, advantages, or honours, which are inconsistent directly or indirectly with the happiness and welfare of others. Whereas, if true christian charity and benevolence were to take place, the selfish affections must lose their influence of course, and the fuel that feeds the lusts of men be entirely consumed. Charity purifies wherever it warms; and if we are under the influence of an universal benevolence, we must ever be disposed to all the virtues of private and social life, and be extensively useful in the various stations in which providence hath placed us. And what is that holiness in which christianity requires us to be unblameable, but that moral character which is formed by a serious regard and constant discharge of all the great duties of our christian calling and profession? And that we may be thus unblameable,

6. Let us with the apostle earnestly pray, that the Lord would make us increase and abound in this love to one another, and to all men, verse 12. Benevolence of temper naturally enlarges by contemplating and conversing with the most lovely and perfect examples of it; and a man can scarcely pray to Christ for the increase of this disposition, but he must find it strengthening and improving in his mind. And hence prayer is doubly useful, as it is the natural means of promoting that holiness

holiness and charity of heart and life which we ask of God, and as it is the appointed means of securing that blessing from above, which is necessary to our establishment. Let none, therefore, be found to live in the habitual neglect of this important duty; and whenever you pray, never forget to pray, that the Lord would make you to encrease and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men. And finally,

7. The consideration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints, is a motive of the strongest importance, to engage us to cultivate this universal benevolence, and to labour after the establishment of our hearts in this unblameable holiness.

Christ will come the second time: his appearance to the judgment of mankind in his Father's glory, is irrevocably determined by the decree of God. The end of his appearance will be to examine what influence his example, his authority, his grace and goodness to mankind have had upon us; whether they have formed us into his spirit, and influenced us to a conversation suitable to, and worthy of, the character of his disciples; whether we have maintained our resolution and integrity under the temptations of life; whether we have lived by the sacred principle of love to God and man; whether it hath possessed our hearts, and rendered our behaviour unblameable, and produced all the fruits of a real holiness in every part of our behaviour. Happy are they that can stand the scrutiny of this awful appearance, and whose faith and charity shall then stand approved by the universal Judge!

This coming of Christ shall be with all his saints: the angels of heaven shall appear in his retinue, those holy friendly spirits, that rejoice over the conversion of every sinner, and kindly minister to the comfort and security of the heirs of salvation: he shall come with all the saints of God that have ever lived in our world, who have purified their hearts by faith, who have been established in holiness, and whose distinguishing characteristic it hath been, that their faith hath wrought by love. Blessed society, of all the wise, the holy, the benevolent part of God's reasonable creation, united under him who was the most perfect pattern of goodness that ever appeared in this world, and whose true character is that benevolent, friendly, divine one, the prince of peace, and the Saviour of mankind! May we now belong to that blessed society, and not one of us be missing in the glorious assembly at that awful day! For

In the last place, the end of his coming with all his saints, is to establish them in holiness, before the presence of God even our Father: here we are in a state of uncertain virtue, encompassed with ensnaring temptations, to draw us aside from faith and charity. Let us but hold out our patience and resolution; that day will perfect all our wishes, remove us out of every danger, fix immutably the benevolent godlike temper, and establish us for ever unblameable in holiness before God. See, christians, and rejoice at this friendly design of the second coming of the Lord! it is to perfect the kind intentions of his first appearance: then he came to put you into the way of salvation: now he comes to render that salvation absolutely compleat. Then he appeared to call and quicken you to the practice of universal holiness: now he comes to remove all the defects of it, and set you above all danger of losing the habits of it. Then he came, by his own love to the world, to produce in you the same benignity of affection and heart: now he comes to approve the temper into which he formed you, and to settle it into a disposition lasting as your being. Welcome, thou Saviour and Son of God;

ever the same, immutable in thy affection and good-will to mankind ! Salvation is ever the design of thy appearance. Grace and mercy guides every path in which thou treadest. When humbled, when exalted, still the same messenger of thy Father's good will to men ! as a suffering spectacle of misery, as an exalted judge, benevolence guide thee ! compassion sits in triumph by thee ! Oh, that we may be worthy of thine acknowledgment and approbation, and, in the due time appointed by thine eternal Father, be removed from all the imperfections of the present state, and be amongst the blessed number, whom thy sentence shall establish unblameable in holiness, and who shall follow thee into the glory of thy heavenly kingdom, and be immoveably fixed in, and perfectly transformed into, his image and likeness !

As this epistle evidently consists principally of three parts, the apostle having finished the two former, proceeds in this chapter, to the end of his letter, to treat of the third, which is of equal importance with either of the two former, viz. to give them those rules and directions, relating to the purity and holiness of the christian life, the observance of which was necessary to their walking worthy of God, to all well pleasing, and to their answering the obligations of their christian character and profession. So that it is without any shew of reason, that some persons assert *, that the apostle had finished the main design of his epistle in the foregoing chapter, and that he gives these practical directions only as it were by the way, and as a less necessary and important matter. For as this part of the letter is much longer than either of the two former ; so in reality, they both tend to introduce this, and to prepare us for the reception of it. He begins with a general exhortation, drawn from the conclusion of the foregoing period.

T E X T.

C H A P. IV.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 1, 2. *Further more* *Furthermore*, or, as the original hath it, το λοιπον, *then we beseech you, brethren,* as to what remains, not, as some very injudiciously explain it †, ‘ *having finished my main design, that as ye have received of us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more ; for ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.*’ which is not the meaning of the word ; but, ‘ *having gone thus far, I proceed to what I farther intended, and to what yet remains to finish the design of this letter :*’ or, in one word finally :

Brethren, we beseech you. He calls them by a name of great intimacy, affection, and friendship, *brethren* ; being nearly united by the bonds of nature, and as christians, constituted the children of the same heavenly Father, and thus brought into the endearing relation of brethren to each other.

Brethren, we beseech you. He chooses rather to influence them by *persuasion*, and prevail on them by the gentler methods of prayer and entreaty, than wholly to enforce the rules of piety by his authority as an apostle. *We beseech you, we ask,*

* Benson.

† Idem.

we request and desire it of you, as though it were a favour done *to ourselves*. He adds in a stronger manner :

And exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ. To exhort implies a dignity and superiority of character, and supposes both the capacity and right of admonition : especially as he enforces it by the authority of Jesus Christ. *We exhort you by him, in his name, and by your regard to him, both as your Saviour and Lord, and as you would approve yourselves to him, whom you expect from heaven as your future judge.*

The exhortation itself is of great importance, viz. that they would more and more abound in the practice of those duties, which he had whilst with them recommended to them. For the natural order and construction of the whole verse is this. *Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that ye would abound more and more, according as you have received from, or been taught by us, how you ought to walk, and to please God.* The word περισσευετε, which we render *abound*, signifies properly to be possessed of an abundance or plenty of any thing : and as those who have such an abundance more than others, do exceed or excel them in that which they have an abundance of, hence the word denotes, to excel. Thus the Seventy have rendered * it, Eccles. iii. 19. *What prebeminence hath a man above a beast?* and, in those writings called Apocryphal, Syr. xi. 12. what we render *a man full of poverty*, is in the original, *a man that exceeds in poverty* †. And in another place, *he that hath small understanding, and feareth God, is better than one who hath much wisdom*; in the original it is, *who abounds or excels in wisdom* ‡, and transgresseth the law of the Most High, Syr. xix. 24. And thus I think the rendering in this place should be, *I beseech and exhort you to excel, according to those directions ye have received of us, how to walk and please God.*

The word we translate *walk*, signifies to live and behave ourselves, or the course and method of our conversation. *How you ought to walk* means, ‘how you may so order and govern all the actions of your lives, as to please God;’ and that, by an easy figure : for, as walking, and going from place to place, is necessary to transact the business of life ; hence almost all the words in the Greek language, that denote *walking* and bodily motion, come to signify not only the bodily motion, but the moral conduct and behaviour, i. e. ‘the motions and transactions of the man, as a reasonable being ; nothing being more usual in all languages, than to transfer words, which originally refer to the body, its senses, and motions, to the perceptions and behaviour of the mind.’ And though the word here rendered *walk*, is, I think, universally censured by critics, as used in a sense in the New Testament, never to be found in other authors of authority and purity, yet, it is a remark that is founded, like most others, if not all of this nature, only in want of due observation and care : for, not to mention, that it is several times used in this sense by the Greek § interpreters of the Old Testament ; it is so used expressly by Isocrates ||, one of the oldest and noblest orators of Greece.

* Τι περισσευσεν ο ανθρωπος παρα το κτηνος.

† Πτωχεια, περισσευει.

‡ Ο περισσευων εν φρονησει.

§ Reg. xx. 3. Prov. viii. 20. Eccles. xi. 9. See also Syr. 10, 27.

|| Αποστον γαρ την μεν νοian εν ταις οικιαις αποκρυπτειν την δε διανοian φανεραν εχοντα περιπατειν. i. e. *ita se gerere ut mens semper operta sit.* Ad Demon. p. 11. B.

But besides the propriety of the word, it is worthy remarking what the great design of every christian should be in his walk or conversation; viz. *to please God*. The word is used in a very emphatical sense by Homer *, which will admirably suit the present place; viz. 'to appease any person we have offended, and so to be restored to his favour and friendship'. This exactly agrees with the circumstances of these Thessalonians, who had offended God by their former idolatries and vices; but by their conversion to christianity they were not only reformed from these, but instructed how to live for the future, so as to prevent the divine displeasure, and secure an interest in his favour and friendship, for the future.

This was what they *had received* from the apostle, and which he exhorts them to attend to: "received from him" by personal instruction, whilst he was present with them; or, as the word in its moral sense properly signifies, what they had been taught by him, and learnt from him, whilst he ministered amongst them; in which spiritual and moral sense the word *received* is used by the very best and purest writers †.

And for the truth of this the apostle appeals to themselves as witnesses. *For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus*, verse 2. He was not afraid or ashamed to refer them to his first instructions, nor to recal to their remembrance the precepts he had given them at his first entrance amongst them; as conscious himself, and knowing that they must be conscious too, that they were precepts of the strictest holiness and virtue. And these he delivered to them *by the Lord Jesus*, i. e. in his name, and enforced by his authority, in order to give them greater weight, and to secure a suitable influence by them. And what these were he particularly enumerates:

The first relates to those lusts of impurity, which were universally allowed by the heathens, and indeed esteemed as reputable and praise-worthy amongst them; from verse 3—9.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 3. *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.*

The commands he gave them by Christ, were *the will of God*: the word signifies, the positive absolute injunction of God; for in this sense, amongst others, *Christ and the Father are one*; his authority as King and Lawgiver being by immediate delegation and gift from God his Father, exercised in his name, and to his glory.

Now this will and command of God, was *their sanctification*. The word as explained by Hesychius ‡ signifies *purification*, or that sanctity which is contracted by a consecration to God: and in this sense it is used by the seventy translators; § particularly for 'money separated, appropriated, and sanctified to God'; and, by the Apocryphal writers ||, who speak of sacrifices, and first fruits of sanctification. And this, I think, is the genuine and peculiar meaning of the

* Αλλ' ἐπει αἰσάμεν, φρεσι λευγαλεσι πειθήσας.

ΑΨ' ἐθέλω ἀρεσαι, δομεναι τ' ἀπεραιοι' ἀποινα. Il. 5. 120. Vid. Eustat.

† Παρειληφάμεν ιστορία. Accepimus, didicimus ex historia. Herod. Hist. i. 11. 1.

‡ Ἀγιασμος, αἱσεία. καθαρεύσις.

§ Ἀγιασμῶ γιάσα το ἀργυριον. Jud. xvii. 3.

|| Ουσίας αἱσμε ἡ ἀπαρχας. Syr. vii. 33.

word in the place before us: *This is the will of God, even your separation from all the common pollutions of the world, and your dedication and consecration to the purposes of religion and virtue.* And in consequence of this, your *abstaining from fornication*; the indulging to which was to defecrate and defile, and prostitute themselves to the most common, and base and vile uses. The word we render *fornication* denotes in the best Greek writers *, all manner of impure and flagitious lusts: and this seems to be intended by the apostle, by that general rule which immediately follows:

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 4. *That every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.*

The apostle having mentioned, that the consecration of ourselves to religion and virtue is the will of God, elegantly styles the body *a vessel*, in allusion to the vessels of the temple, which were intirely devoted to sacred purposes, and never to be profaned by common use: the meaning therefore is, 'let every man look upon his body, as a vessel appropriated and consecrated to the sacred services of God's temple, and as such dread the impiety of profaning it by vile, lascivious, and impure indulgences.' I might add, that this very term, *vas*, or *vessel*, is by one of the most elegant Latin poets that ever wrote applied much in the same sense:

Intellexit ibi vitium vas afficere ipsum,

Omniaque illius vitio corrumpier intus. Lucret. l. vi. v. 16. 17.

Let him know how to *possess it in sanctification and honour*: to *possess* it is to use and employ and maintain it in sanctification and honour; 'let him use it as a thing consecrated to God, and pay it that respect and reverence which is due to its sacred character and designation.' There is a great deal of beauty and propriety in the joining these two words *sanctification* and *honour* together; because any thing that is appropriated to God, for that reason becomes venerable and deserves respect; and on the other hand, the paying a due respect to our bodies, and keeping them pure and chaste, out of obedience to the will of God, is a real consecration of them to him. Ælian, in his Various History †, speaking of the delights and pleasures of the ancient temple of Thessaly, tells us, 'that the constant honour, τιμη,' (the word the apostle makes use of) 'paid to the deity in this place, made it holy and consecrate to God.' So that our bodies, as devoted to religion, deserve to be so revered, as to be kept from all impure profanations; and the reverence thus paid them is a proper consecration of them to God.

And as impurities of all kinds were frequent amongst the Gentiles, the apostle adds:

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 5. *Not in the lusts of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.*

The word we render *lusts*, properly signifies, the *passions*, or dispositions or affections of the mind in general ‡, and is used in the same construction, as by the apostle, to denote 'the passions of

* Πορνός ἢ πορνία. apud Arist.

† Η τιμη η διαρκης, η περι το κρείττον, εκθεσι του τοπον. Ælian. V. H. l. iii. p. 197.

‡ Της ψυχης παθος. Animi affectum. apud Æl. V. H. l. xiv. 22.

'grief, emulation, envy, and others *.' The other word we render *concupiscence*, signifies † *desire* in general, and in particular the desire and thirst after ‡ riches, empire, pleasures §, and especially after criminal lusts ||. So that the meaning is, that men are not to employ and indulge themselves in any impure and criminal passions, and desires whatsoever.

This, as the apostle tells us, was the reproach of the Gentiles who *knew not God*; a character of them which their own historians and writers abundantly justify. Even the virtuous Cato amongst the Romans, as Horace tells us **, justified and even commended these foul debaucheries. Terence ††, one of the chastest writers amongst the Romans, declares them to be no crimes. Cicero ‡‡, in his oration for Cœlius, publicly defends these wickednesses, declares them to have been justified by the practice of their ancestors, and that they were never blamed or prohibited by any. Amongst the Greeks the same impurities were publicly allowed; a thousand authorities might be alledged. I shall only mention one, who in his oration to the Athenians, to encourage them to the war against the Lacedemonians, amongst other advantages of victory, scruples not publicly to mention, the liberty it would procure them to indulge these criminal passions, and even the most unnatural lusts §§: to such an height of wickedness and impiety were they grown; so that it is with the greatest justice the apostle charges the Gentiles with these wickednesses.

And the reason he assigns is, because they *knew not God*; they worshipped false and impure deities, who were both patrons and examples of these crimes; and were therefore ignorant of the one true God, of the purity and rectitude of his nature, and of the holiness and perfection of his law; and by consequence had no sense of his authority, nor fear of his displeasure to curb their passions, or restrain them from the most unlawful indulgences.

The apostle proceeds in the same argument.

T E X T.

Ver. 6. *That no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That these words refer to the foregoing subject, is evident from the reasons which the apostle afterwards subjoins, and will appear if we consider the strict and literal meaning of the words themselves.

The word which we render *go beyond*, literally signifies, *to go, or, pass over any*

* Εκ της λυπης παθος. Æl. V. H. p. 724. παθος ζηλος και φθονος. Herod. Hist. l. 3. c. 2. §. 16.

† Επιθυμια τε ψευδεσθαι. Luc. Philop. p. 326.

‡ Της τε πλατς επιθυμια. Herod. i. 12. 11. Μοναρχιας. Id. viii. 8. 7.

§ ηδονων. Id. i. 6. 6.

|| Αιχραι επιθυμια. foedæ libidines. vi. 1. 12.

** Quidam notus homo, cum exiret fornice, Maeste

Virtute esto, inquit sententia Dia Catonis.

Hor. Sat. l. i. Sat. 2. v. 31, &c.

†† Non est flagitium, mihi crede, adolescentulum scortari, neque Potare. Non est. Adelph. i. 2. 21.

Scortari crebro volunt. Heaut. i. 2. 32.

‡‡ Verum, si quis est, qui etiam meretriciis amoribus interdictum juventuti putet, est ille quidem valde severus. vid. seq. pro Cœlio. c. 20.

§§ Νεοις ανδρασι, ηλικιας δε αθυρματα, παιδες καλοι και γυναικες. Lelbon. Orat. p. 218.

thing *, a river or mountain : hence it is used in a figurative sense, for passing over and invading the boundaries of our neighbour's property, fixed by law and equity; and particularly the landmark of another's field † : hence for transgressing in general the boundaries and limits of reason and justice, i. e. for all kind of offences and transgressions whatsoever ‡, which are all of them breachers of the limits and boundaries of truth and righteousness. Hence the words *transgressing* and *sinning*, are used by Homer || as equivalent terms ; and it is observable, that Eustathius ** the great critic on that ancient poet, tells us, that this word which we render *go beyond* or *transgressing*, hath a stronger meaning than the other word which we constantly render *sinning*, and that it denotes sinning or offending in an eminent and very aggravated manner, as implying in its literal sense, a bold and violent leaping over, or breaking through any settled or fixed boundaries and limits. Now this judicious observation exactly suits the place before us : Nature and Providence have fixed bounds and limits to men's passions and desires, the bounds of temperance and chastity, beyond which they should never be suffered to pass. And reason and justice have placed bounds between us and our neighbour's property, which should be as sacred in all cases, as the landmark in the field, and can never be broken through without the highest wickedness. When therefore the apostle says, *That no man should go beyond his brother* ; the meaning is, ' that he should not endeavour to gratify his passions beyond the limits of chastity ; should not break through the boundaries of justice, that separate his brother's property from his own, by any dishonourable attempts upon any of those that are his dearest possession ; those valuable and precious branches of his family, for whose honour and security a good man would even dare to die.'

The other word which we render *defraud*, is a word also of a general signification, and literally denotes to have or *possess more than another*. Thus it is used to signify, ' excelling even in virtue, and abounding in riches : ' and because rich persons are too often too *tenacious* of their abundance, hence it naturally denotes *to be covetous* ; and because covetous persons often use methods of fraud and injustice to encrease their riches, hence the word signifies *by craft and violence to defraud another out of his property* ††. The very thing unquestionably that the apostle here intended : let no man *pass over the bounds, nor defraud his brother* by violence and craft ; not, as we render it, *in any matter*, the word *any* not being in the original, but *in the matter* or affair, viz. of which I have been speaking, i. e. of criminal and forbidden lusts ; these being the methods one or other of them, by which licentious men always accomplish their profligate desires. There are many

* Ορος. Herod. 3. 2. 1. Ρευματα 3. 14. 18.

† Αγρυ γειτονος οντος αποσχεο, μηδ' αν υπερβης. Phocyl. v. 32.

‡ υπερβαινειν γαρ το αμαρτανειν. Eustat. in Hom. p. 1317. l. 47.

|| Οτε κεν τις υπερβηη και αμαρτη. Il. Γ.

** Eust. p. 767. l. 53, &c. Εν δε τω υπερβηη και αμαρτη, εκ παραλληλης δηλεται το αυτο, επι και υπερβασια και αμαρτια της αυτης εννοιας εισιν. Αλλως δε, αμαρτειν μεν το οπωσεν ασοχησαι τε δεοντος. υπερβηναι δε το καθ' υπερβολην κτω παθειν. ληφθεν μεταφορικως εκ των μη βαινοντων ευτακτως, αλλ' υπερβαινοντων. Εικος δε ειληφθαι την λεξιν ταυτην και εκ των αδικειντων, εν τω υπερβαινειν τα τεταγμενα οροθεσια, & μονον υπελως, δια τε ηρεμα ορογλυφειν, αλλα και δρασυτερον, δια τε υπερπηδαν. In Hom. Il. I. v. 497.

†† βια και πλεονεξια αδικων. Æl. V. H. l. iii. c. 16.

authorities, to shew that this is the precise meaning of the words, we render, *in any matter* *.

Having thus forbidden all these impurities, the apostle subjoins the several motives that were proper to enforce the prohibition, and give it its full weight and authority.

The first is, what he had told them before, and testified to them, viz. when he was personally present with them, *That the Lord is the avenger of all such*, i. e. 'either of such persons or crimes.' The word we render *avenger*, properly signifies, he who punishes another justly for his crimes †, and is applied by Homer himself to God, who saith, he *hath an avenging eye* ‡. God observes all these impurities of profligate sinners, and will severely punish them.

The next reason is,

T E X T.

Ver. 7. *That God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The construction of the Greek verb *εκαλεσεν*, from whence our English word, *called*, is derived, is peculiar, and in this form denotes the end and design of such calling. There is a remarkable passage in one of the Greek historians, which if rightly considered, would explain almost all those passages, in which christians are said to *be called of God*. He tells us, that Severus, before he was emperor of Rome, took courage to attempt the possession of the imperial dignity, because he § hoped he was called by the divine Providence to the empire; where the same word, and in the same construction, is used as in the place before us. And as Severus meant by *the call of Providence*, the conduct, designation, and intimation of Providence; so here, *God hath not called us to uncleanness*, hath not by his Providence and preaching of the gospel, intimated or designed, or allowed us, to gratify ourselves in any of these criminal impurities; but hath called us *to holiness*; the same word that we render, ver. 3. *sanctification*; which I have shewed you, denotes the separation and consecration of ourselves to God: so that the meaning is, 'God hath not called us to these licentious gratifications, nor intended us the liberty of indulging them; but called us, as christians by a separation and sanctification of us to himself, from all the corrupt and vicious part of mankind, and from the profanation and pollution of those crimes, which they greedily commit.' And finally he concludes this head of discourse by adding:

T E X T.

Ver. 8. *He therefore that despises, despises not man but God,*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word rendered *despises*, signifies to *reject any thing with contempt* || as false and groundless: or, as Hefychius

* Ηδόμενοι τῷ πραγματι. *Ipsa re delectati*. Luc. Philop. p. 327. l. 5. ὡρων πολλὰς ἐκ ἐρωτὶ φιλοσοφίας εἰχομένους, ἀλλὰ δοξῆς μόνον τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων. Luc. Revivis. p. 407. Το πραγμα υποπτευν. *Totum negotium compositum suspicabatur*. Herod. iii. 12. 7. Vide alterum exemplum apud Raphel. in loc. Sic Lycurg. Orat. p. 110. l. 6. ποιησονται δὲ καὶ γὰρ τὴν κατηγορίαν δικαίαν, ὅτε ψευδομένης ἔδεν, ὅτ' ἐξω τῶν πραγμάτων λέγων. *Nihil extra rem, quod ad negotium non pertinet dicens*. Et iterum, p. 111. 9.

† Εὐδίκαι τὰ γεννησόμενα ἔργα. Herod. 7. 5. 10.

‡ Ἐχει θεὸς ἐκδικὸν ὄμμα. Βατραχ. v. 96.

§ Ἐλπίζων τε θεῖα πρόνοια ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν καλεῖσθαι. Herod. 2. 10. 9.

|| Diod. Sic. p. 27. c. ἀθετεῖσθαι ἀποφασιν. *Repudiari sententiam suam*. Hefych. ἀθετεῖ. ἀτιμαζέει, ἐπὶ αἰσθάνεται.

God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Hesychius explains it, to throw it away with dishonour and scorn. He therefore, who thus rejects these precepts relating to chastity and purity, as false and groundless, and despises and contemns them as unworthy his regard, and as severe and unnecessary restraints, casts contempt not *upon man* properly, but *upon God*, by whose authority and in whose name they are delivered; which the apostle proves by adding, *He hath given unto us his holy Spirit*, i. e. 'to me as an apostle:' and therefore the contempt of these rules, is a contempt of that Spirit of God by which I speak, and by consequence of God himself, who hath granted this Spirit to me.' This divine inspiration of the apostle, was an argument of the greatest force to strengthen these exhortations, and shews that treating them with disregard and contempt, was the highest impiety, and exposed men to the greatest dangers.

I hope there is no need of cautioning my readers against these flagitious crimes: however, let me briefly lay the whole before you for your warning and observation.

The general rule of the christian conversation here laid down is, That you ought so to walk, so to behave yourselves, as always to please God, and in this care and ambition constantly to endeavour to excel: It is this which should be the only pride of life; that true, noble height of spirit, that teaches us how to approve ourselves to God, and finally to secure his approbation.

The particular rules, under this general head, are, That we should abstain from all manner of impurities whatsoever; that we should mortify and subdue all the inward passions and affections of vice, and that we should never transgress the sacred laws and bounds of the strictest chastity; nor for any personal gratifications invade, and licentiously leap over those limits, that separate our neighbour's, our brother's property from our own; but that we should preserve our bodies pure and undefiled, and by consecrating them to God, and to the purposes of religion and virtue, should add an honour and dignity even to perishing and mean dust and ashes, and lay a foundation for their future refinement by the hand of God, into incorruptible receptacles and houses for the spiritual and immortal soul.

The reasons assigned to strengthen these sacred laws of chastity are, That it is the will of God we should be separated from these corruptions of the rest of mankind: That God hath called us by the gospel, not to criminal impurities, but to an intire separation from them: That the precepts relating to this subject are delivered by the Spirit of God, and that the despising and rejecting them, is a contempt even of God himself: That God will avenge and severely punish all iniquities of this kind; and that though it was no wonder that the Gentiles, who were ignorant of God, should approve and practise these crimes; yet that a due knowledge of God and his perfections, render them absolutely inexcusable, and must draw after them an aggravated and peculiar condemnation: as therefore you regard the authority of the most high God, if there be any thing engaging in the sacred and endearing name of the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour, if you have any concern for your own safety, would approve yourselves to God, and escape the revenging power of his anger, "Be ye holy as God is holy;" and let it be the motto of every one of you, engraven as it were on soul and body: "holiness to the Lord,"

The apostle having given very particular directions concerning that purity and chastity, which became the gospel of Jesus Christ; proceeds to mention another virtue of great importance in the christian life; but in such a manner as carries in it rather the commendation of a friend, than the exhortation of an authorised apostle: It is that of brotherly kindness.

T E X T.

Ver. 9, 10. *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another: And indeed ye do it towards all the brethren, which are in all Macedonia. But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Brotherly love is the love and affection which is due from brethren towards each other, which is or ought to be very sincere and fervent, because the relation itself is founded in nature, and one of the nearest that can be between man and man: and in this endearing view all christians ought to look on and treat each other. And the apostle had observed such a benevolent and affectionate regard in the Thessalonian converts towards one another, that he says to them by way of high commendation, “*as to brotherly love, ye have no need that I should write to you;*” “ye want no particular instructions and admonitions from me concerning it;” *for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.* This may refer to the natural disposition which the apostle observed in them to mutual affection and friendship; the natural disposition being originally and peculiarly from God; in which sense Homer introduces Terpiades the singer as telling Ulysses, “*I am taught of myself;*” for the gods have implanted in my mind poems or hymns “*of all kinds**,” hereby acknowledging this his natural felicity and skill in his peculiar art to be from God. Or else the apostle may refer to the effect which the doctrine he had taught them had upon them; they had so cordially received the gospel of God, and so firmly believed it, that it shewed its good influence in all the genuine fruits of an affectionate brotherly love: so that they needed no farther instruction from the apostle on this head; “*they were taught of God,*” effectually taught by that doctrine of God which they had received, and those gifts of the Spirit of God, that were vouchsafed them, “*to love one another.*” The apostle seems, I think, plainly to refer to that prophecy, *Isai. liv. 13. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;* which, as cited and applied by our blessed Saviour, *John vi. 45.* seems plainly to refer to the general publication of the gospel doctrine, and the universal knowledge that should spread amongst mankind by the preaching and belief of it, and the means that should be made use of for its confirmation.

And as an evidence that they were thus *taught of God*, the apostle adds, *For indeed ye do it towards all the brethren that are in Macedonia. Ye do it,* i. e. ‘I bear you witness of your sincere affection towards all your brethren in Christ throughout the whole province of Macedonia.’ Titus had informed him of their abundant charity to them, of which they probably gave a proof in the sympathy they expressed on account of their persecutions, and by the kind assistance they gave them for their encouragement and support. And therefore the apostle, in-

* Αυτοδιδακτος εειμι. θεος δε μοι εν φρεσιν οικμας παντοιας ενεφυσεν.

Hom. Odyss. χ. v. 347, 348.

stead of recommending the virtue, only presseth their perseverance and abounding in it. *Therefore we beseech you, brethren, that ye abound more and more.* Cultivate this excellent disposition, and labour more abundantly to excel in it.

The next advice is, to a quiet behaviour, and diligence in the management of their own private affairs.

T E X T.

Ver. 11, 12. *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The word φιλοτιμεισθαι, we render *study*, in its primary sense, signifies ‘to be ambitious’ of any thing; or to be acted by the love of praise and honour: and because ambitious men generally pursue their desires with great warmth and eagerness, hence the word comes to denote in general † ‘great diligence and vigour, in any affairs whatsoever that are under our management:’ and this is the true import of the word in the place before us, and our translation should not have omitted the peculiar emphasis, and distinguishing force of it, but should have rendered it, “That ye *diligently or earnestly* study,” viz.

To be quiet. The meaning of which word is not, ‘to be indolent, idle, or unactive,’ the very advice directing to a quite contrary behaviour, viz. to great diligence and industry. The original word, ησυχάζειν, we render to *be quiet*, is used in a variety of senses, viz. to denote ‘the being quiet, so as to abstain from war, from tumults, from injuries, from business, and in general to live an orderly, quiet, and peaceable life.’ And agreeably the word here signifies ‘to be quiet, so as to abstain from all irregular and disorderly behaviour, and not to intermeddle with those affairs, whether of a public or private nature, that did not properly belong to them:’ and in this very sense the original word, that signifies *quiet* or *rest*, is used by the best writers ‡; probably Titus informed the apostle, that the Thessalonians were too much given to this busy and impertinent disposition, which he calls *walking disorderly*, 2 Thess. iii. 6. and indeed this was too much the temper of the Grecians in general, which their own writers take notice of, and which their comedians used to reproach them for on the public theatre §. And as such a spirit must necessarily occasion many mischiefs and disorders, it is with great reason the apostle forbids it, and commands,

That they should *do their own business*, ‘manage, and confine themselves to, their own particular affairs,’ as the original words Πρασσειν τα ιδια signify, ‘without officiously intermeddling with the concerns of others:’ and in this sense the word ιδια is peculiarly and properly used, to denote what particularly belongs to *private persons*, in opposition to what is of a public or common concern.

And therefore the apostle adds, *and that ye work with your own hands*, as we have commanded you. They were persons concerned in trade and manufacture,

* Φιλοτιμησαμένης της ανθρωπίνης φύσεως. Quasi humana natura ambitione quadam permota fuerit. Herodian. l. i. c. 13. § 12.

† Φιλοτιμεισθαι ησυχάζειν. Sic cum infinitivo construatur. Ælian. V. Hist. l. 9. c. 29. εφιλοτιμησατο Αλκιβιάδης δωρα πολλά περιψαι Σωκράτει.

‡ Εκείνο δ’ ε βέλοϊ αν, ησυχίαν έχων ζην αργος; Arist. Plat. v. 922. Sed an vis tranquille, in ocio vivere? i. e. iis quæ ad te nihil pertinent prorsus omisiss, ut Comicus ipse explicat, v. 910, 911.

§ Euripid. Antiop. apud Stob. p. 221. Οσις δε πρασσει πολλά, μη πρασσει παρον, Μωρος, παρον ζην ηδως απραγμονα. Sic, πλειστα πρασσαν. Id. ibid.

or such as had no other way of livelihood, but by the labour of their hands. And therefore, to prevent their imagining that their conversion to christianity gave them a right to a maintenance, without their own industry; the apostle, when he was first with them, ordered them to employ themselves in their own respective callings, whether particular trades and manufactures, or the more servile labour and employment of their hands. The original word *εργαζεσθαι*, we render *work*, is of a very general signification, and denotes * labouring and working of any kind; and is particularly used of agriculture, all kind of manufactures, employments, and those laborious exercises of life, which fall to the lot of the poorer sort of mankind: and the reason urged by the apostle why they should thus diligently employ their own hands in their respective callings was,

That ye may walk honestly towards them that are without. Our translators have not well expressed the sense of the original word, *Ευσχημονως*, which they have rendered, *honestly*. Hesychius explains it by a word that signifies, *cautiously* †, and tells us, that the word signifies ‡ ‘those who make proper and graceful movements and figures in dancing.’ Hence it comes to signify in general, “decently and orderly,” “with propriety and comeliness:” so that the meaning here is, “that ye may walk honestly,” i. e. behave with regularity, such a decent well ordered conduct, as may be approved by, and acceptable to, those that are without, so that they may find no occasion justly to blame or censure you, or to reproach the religion you profess on your account. And that this is the meaning of the word, is evident from what the apostle joins the same word with, 1 Cor. xiv. 40. *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

By those who *are without*, *τας εξω*, the apostle means, such as are without the church, not yet converted, Gentiles or Jews, not proselyted to christianity. Thus the apostle opposes *those that are without*, to *those who are within*. “What have I to do to judge them that are without,” those who are not members of the christian church? “Do not ye judge them that are within?” Those that belong to your own body, and are the professed members of your society, as christians? 1 Cor. v. 12. And in a similar sense the phrase is to be found in profane writers.

And what rendered this diligence in their own affairs the more necessary and commendable was, that hereby they *would have need of nothing*, i. e. ‘they would procure a sufficiency for their own maintenance and livelihood, and not want to be relieved by others:’ or the words may as well be rendered, according to the marginal reading, “they would have need of no man;” by working themselves, they would not need the assistance of others; they would not want to ask charity of others, especially of unbelievers; the doing which might prove a disgrace to christianity, and oftentimes expose those who were forced to it, to dangerous temptations, to apostacy from their christian profession. These admonitions were the more necessary in the beginning of christianity, when the generality of converts were of the poorer and meaner sort of mankind; to prevent this reproach being cast on the christian religion, that it took persons off from their labours and employments in life, and encouraged idleness and sloth in those who professed it; which, had it been true, must have made the world regard it as an enemy to human

* Και τ' εργαζομενος πολυ φιλητος αθανατοις. Hesiod. Oper. Ει δε κεν εργαζη ταχα σε ζηλωσει αεργος πλητευντα. Æl. V. H. παν θο χειρων η καματη σωματος εργον πρωτος εργαζεται. Æl. V. H. 4. 7. 9.

† Ευσχημονως. ευλαβως. Cautè.

‡ Ευσχημονες, ευσχημονως η ευ σχηματα εν ορχησει ποιηντες.

society, and as very prejudicial to the civil peace and welfare. But as the apostle was an example of great diligence himself, working with his own hands, so he took care to recommend the same industry amongst others; well knowing that the great affair of religion and men's salvation was perfectly consistent with the necessary application to their worldly concerns, and that indolence and negligence herein was a thing criminal in its nature, and would tend to confirm unbelievers in their prejudices against the christian doctrine and religion.

Having finished these advices, the apostle proceeds to another subject of great importance, which was, to comfort the Thessalonians concerning their friends departed in the faith of Christ, and to prevent their sorrowing immoderately upon their account. And this he doth by the noblest arguments, and such as were peculiar to the religion and gospel of Christ. And this subject he treats of from verse 13th of this chapter to the 11th verse of the ensuing. He begins,

T E X T.

Ver. 13, 14. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

I would not have you to be ignorant, i. e. (by a figure common to the best writers) 'I would have you well informed concerning the state and condition of those that sleep, i. e. of those who are dead.' Under this image of sleep, death is frequently represented in the ancient writings both of Greece and Rome. Thus Cicero* introduces Cato the elder declaring, 'That nothing is so like to death as sleep, and that as nothing more certainly shews the divine original of the mind than sleep, because it oftentimes then foresees future events; so from hence we may justly infer what the mind will be capable of, when wholly released from these fetters of the body by death.' And Xenophon, from whom Cicero transcribed his sentiments, tells us of Cyrus, that just before his death, he comforted his children and friends by the same comparison†. Socrates also, just before his drinking the fatal poison, comforts himself, by declaring, 'That death was like to that easy and pleasant sleep, which was undisturbed by any uncomfortable dreams; and even on that account he esteemed it his gain‡.' And Homer and Hesiod, the most ancient poets of the Greeks, both declare sleep and death to be brethren, there was so great a resemblance between them. And Callimachus, another ancient and elegant poet, speaking of a dead person, says of him, 'That he sleeps a sacred sleep: Say not therefore, that good men die§.' But it is with unspeakably greater propriety that revelation speaks of death under the similitude of sleep, not only on account of its being a release from all the labours and afflictions of life, which was the reason why the heathens compared it to sleep, but because it is to be succeeded by a resurrection to new life and vigour; and here-

* De Senect. c. 22.

† Κυροπ. p. 656.

‡ Plat. Apol. p. 40. c. d.

§ Τηδε Σαων ὁ Δικωνος Αχανθιος ιερὸν ὑπνον

Κοιματια. θνησκειν μη λεγε της αγαθης. Cal. Epigr. 10.

in resembles properly the natural sleep of men, which is but short, and tends to the refreshment of the spirit, and not to the extinction of life and being. So that the first thing which the apostle insinuates as an argument of comfort, concerning those who are dead in Christ, is, 'that they are more properly *asleep* than dead; and 'that in the *morning* they shall surely revive to a new and happier state.' And this he would have them acquainted with, and established in the belief of,

That they might not sorrow, even as others who have no hope. Amongst the Jews, the Sadducees believed no future state, and by consequence could have no hope at all concerning those who were dead. And as to the Pharisees, though they had some persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and of a resurrection to life, yet it was obscure and indistinct, and seemed rather to be the doctrine of the transmigration of souls into other bodies, than a resurrection to a new, spiritual, and divine life*: and by consequence their hope concerning the dead could give them very little satisfaction or pleasure. Amongst the heathens some of the wiser and better sort had some notion of a future state of happiness for the souls of good men, but very far from a certain and fixed belief of it. Even Socrates, just before his death, expresses his own uncertainty about it†. "I am in great hopes," saith he to his friends, "that death will prove an happy event to me. For one of these two things must necessarily happen; either that death will entirely take away all sensation, or that it is a translation of the soul from one place to another." And when he speaks of this latter supposition, it is always as a very uncertain thing, frequently adding these words, which shewed his own doubts about it, "If so be what is said on this affair should prove true." Just in the same uncertainty, whether the soul survived, or perished with the body, died Cyrus the Persian emperor, as Xenophon‡ relates it. And § Cicero makes Cato speak exactly in the same doubtful manner, putting into his mouth the very words that Xenophon ascribes to Cyrus. So that the utmost these great men could attain to, was the alternative of the question; one or other must happen; but that the soul should survive the body, and be happy in another state, they were far from determining. Therefore though it could not be said of these, and some others, "that they had no hope," yet it might truly be said of them, that they had but a very obscure and imperfect one.

But of the generality of the heathen world, it is literally true, that they had no hope concerning those that were dead. They did not, indeed believe their souls to be extinct; but that they existed in *Ades*, in a future state: and that though there was a difference in the future condition of good and bad men, yet that the state even of the good in *Ades* was extremely unhappy and uncomfortable, and always to continue so; insomuch that Homer introduces Achilles, whom he makes a prince in the infernal regions, as declaring, 'that he had rather be alive, even though he was to be a country boor, and forced to serve a poor man for hire, than king over all the dead||.' Lucian, who was well acquainted with the sentiments of the vulgar, tells us in his *Treatise of Mourning***, 'That their common belief was, that there was a certain deep place under the earth, which

* Jos. Antiq. l. 18. c. 1. § 2. 3. 4. et de Bel. Jud. l. 2. c. 8.

† Plat. Apol. Soc. p. 40. c. 2. p. 41. c.

‡ Kypion. p. 656.

§ De Senect. c. 22.

|| Odyss. v. 488, 489, 490.

** Lucian. de Luct. p. 300.

‘ they called Tartarus, that was absolutely void of all light; and that the dead entered into this place, without any possibility of their ever returning to life; being inclosed and surrounded with unpassable lakes and rivers, and shut up with an adamantine gate; and that the generality of those who enter there are condemned to perpetual fasting and hunger *; and that because death took them from all the sensual enjoyments of the present life, to which they were never more to be recovered, therefore they esteemed it as the greatest of all possible evils †.’ So that the generality of the heathen world had the most dreadful apprehensions of death, and entertained no manner of hopes of their being ever delivered from this substantial calamity. And are therefore justly described by the apostle, as ‘ those who were without any hope,’ in reference to death.

And agreeable to this apprehension, such was the sorrow they expressed at the death of any of their valuable friends. Thus we are told ‘ That all were dissolved into tears, and nothing was to be seen but beating of breasts, pulling their hair, tearing their cheeks, rending their garments, throwing dust upon their heads, rolling on the earth, and beating their heads against the ground: relations uttering the bitterest complaints, and breaking out into the most passionate lamentations on account of the dead §.’ In a word, every thing argued the most perfect distress, and contributed to render their funeral solemnities a scene of horror and despair. And really, looking on death in the view in which they considered it, as the most dreadful of all evils, from which there was no redemption, the deepest mourning was but suitable to so fatal a calamity ‡.

But such immoderate sorrow as this, is unbecoming the christian character and profession, which gives a much more pleasing view of death as to good men, and represents it only as a sleep, the sleep of a night ||, that they may rise more refreshed and chearful in the morning. Especially considering what the apostle further assures us of:

That, *if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* This sentence is evidently defective, according to the frequent use of the Greek language **, and must be thus supplied, to render the sense and construction clear and complete. ‘ If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, so we also believe that God will bring with him those that sleep in Jesus.’ The two great articles of the christian faith, relating to Christ, are, that he died as the propitiation for the sins of the world; and that, by the power of God, he was raised from the dead to an endless life. Now, if we believe this, we have reason to believe also, that God, who raised him, will also bring those who sleep in Christ with him; viz. bring them from the dead to life and glory

* Lucian. De Lust. p. 302.

† Τες πολλες το μεγαλον των κακων τον θανατον οισθαι, p. 307, fine.

Ατραπον εις Αιδεω Ηνυσεν την επω τις εναντιον ηλθεν οδιτης. Apud Stob. p. 487.

§ Idem. p. 303.

‡ Δια ταυ τ’ αλασα λυζω
Θαμα, ταρταρον δεδοικας.
Αιδεω γαρ εσι δεινος
Μυχος. Αργαλει δ’ ες αυτον
Καθοδος. Και γας ετοιμον
Καταβαντι μ’ αναβηναι. Anacreon.

|| Και γαρ εδεν πλειων ο πας χρονος φαινεται ετω δη ειναι η μια νυξ. Socrat. apud Plat. Apol. p. 40. 2.

(** Vorstius hic temerè.)

by his power, with Christ at his second appearance. We have the expression complete, Heb. ii. 10. "It became him to bring many sons to glory*." The word Ἀγει, we render *bring*, sometimes signifies to raise a person to dignity and empire by force and power†; a sense that perfectly agrees with this place, and denotes, that in spite both of the power of death and the grave, God will hereafter bring them to life, that they may appear with Christ their head, when he shall be introduced to the final judgment of the world.

Those who sleep in Jesus, if this connection of the words be the right one, means those who have died in the faith of Christ, and the steadfast profession of the gospel. And this sense the words may well enough bear, as the Greek preposition ‡ is often used to signify *in*, though the original sense of it is *through*. But as this construction is a little singular, so the words are capable of another construction and sense. "Those who are asleep God will by Jesus bring with him to glory. God will raise them up to life by Christ, and when he brings, introduces, raises him up, to the judgment of the world, he will then bring them along with him, and raise them to the glory prepared for them;" according to that of our blessed Lord, John v. 26. "As the Father hath life in himself," the original power of conferring life, "so hath he given the Son to have life in himself," i. e. the power of conferring it on whomsoever he pleaseth.

The PRACTICAL RULES and TRUTHS are such as these:

1. That all our good propensities and inclinations, however, natural, and inserted into our frame, are truly and properly from God: the benevolent, friendly, affectionate temper, even though constitutional, is the gift of God. "Ye are taught of God to love one another;" viz. as they discovered a natural propensity to brotherly love, inasmuch that they needed no instruction on this article. Or, if the meaning of being "taught of God," is, that their belief of the christian doctrine had formed them into this happy disposition, the instruction from hence will be,

2. That whatever virtues we learn from the gospel of Christ, we learn of God; and that the benevolence and brotherly love which the faith of the gospel inspires, is inspired by God; and that all who receive instruction from thence are taught of him. For the doctrine of the gospel is properly his, because taught by his Son, and inspired by his Spirit; and because he is the God of love, and by his example teaches us the benevolent and friendly disposition. And therefore,

3. This is a temper in which we ought to endeavour more and more to abound and excel. "I beseech you to encrease more and more." It is a disposition that can never be too carefully cultivated, but which, the more it grows, renders us more perfectly like the God of love, and encreases our meetness for sharing in the effects of his immutable favour.

4. The apostle here reproves that busy meddling spirit, which is too often visible amongst professed christians, who love to thrust themselves into the affairs of others, and mind every thing else but what peculiarly belongs to themselves. The consequence of this is often the ruin of their own affairs, and the occasion of a great deal of disorder and trouble in those of others. To prevent this evil spirit, and the mischiefs that always more or less flow from it, the apostle further orders,

* Εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγοντα.

† Ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἡγόν ὡς τι βελομενον. Herod. 7. 1. 22.

‡ Δια per pro *en in*, quia Hebræorum ∩ pro utroque ponitur.

5. That they should study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and work with their own hands, i. e. behave themselves peaceably in their several stations, and diligently employ themselves in the respective services and callings in which Providence had placed them. Christianity was never designed to take men off from the civil affairs of life, or to encourage indolence and sloth in the professors of it, or to give them a right of maintenance from others, if they are capable of working themselves. And therefore the very pretence of piety becomes impertinence and superstition, when it is made a cover for idleness, and renders men negligent of their several secular occupations. The christian life is a life of great decency and order, and this order can never be maintained without every one's knowing his own station, and by honest diligence, in dependence on the blessing of God, taking care to preserve themselves from the want of the necessaries of life. And therefore there is nothing more evident, than that, the encouraging great numbers of idle drones, in religious houses, as they are called, to live without labour, under pretence of being abstracted from the world, and cultivating a more exemplary sanctity, is a great detriment to civil society, as it deprives it of the assistance of many useful hands; and hath no foundation in christianity and true religion; but is itself a breach of this rule of the gospel, that persons should study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and work with their hands, as they are commanded; that they may not live by the undeserved charity of others, but may provide for their own necessities. This is to walk devoutly, and orderly, and acceptably both to God and man. Let us therefore go on with wisdom, and diligence, and integrity in the management of our civil affairs and callings; and may that God who alone can prosper the work of our hands, give us all that success that is necessary to our comfort and usefulness here, and consistent with his design of bringing us to everlasting life and glory hereafter!

In order to prevent the Thessalonian converts from indulging immoderate sorrow, upon account of their deceased friends*, the apostle assures them, verse 14. that *if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so we ought also to believe that those who sleep in Jesus, God will bring to life and glory with him*; viz. when he shall make his second appearance to the universal judgment. And as a farther argument of support, he adds, that the final happiness, even of such Christians as die before this second coming of Christ, should commence as soon as theirs, who should be found alive at his appearance.

T E X T.

Verse 15. *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent those which are asleep.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

This we say to you by the word of the Lord, i. e. 'by the express command of Christ, who hath himself given me this revelation, and ordered me to deliver it to you.' The subject was of such a nature, as could not be known without an immediate discovery from God by Christ; viz. that *we which are alive, shall not prevent those which are asleep.*

We which are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord. The apostle here plainly supposes, that at this second coming of Christ, there would be many per-

* Forte fuit quædam superstitio in hoc luctu. Lacrymis putabantur gaudere umbræ. Et fleat effusis ante sepulchra comis. Tibul. l. 1. El. 3. v. 8. et ibid. notas. Vid. Eurip. Hec. v. 30. Epigram. l. 3. p. 416. Ep. 18.

sons living in the earth, who should survive even till this solemnity should actually commence. And in this sense the word we render *left* is frequently used by the best writers*, viz. to denote those who *survive*, or outlive others. Those who shall be then found alive, may be truly said to survive the whole race of mankind, as they shall be the last of them, and, if sincere Christians, be so transformed into immortal life and glory, as to be exempted from the common fatality of death.

Some learned persons think, from the manner of the expression, *We who are alive, surviving to the coming of the Lord*, that St. Paul imagined, that this day of Christ was then just at hand, and that he, and several of the christians of that age, should be of the number of those that should not die, but be transformed. Others deny this, and think that such a supposition is injurious to St. Paul's character as an inspired apostle; and that had he been allowed to fall into such a mistake as this, it must have prejudiced his authority, and hindered the success of his gospel. Grotius is represented as the author of the former opinion, that the apostle imagined he himself should live to the day of Christ's second coming: but upon looking carefully into that learned author, I find he hath been generally mistaken, and that in reality he asserts no such thing. What he saith is only this, 'That Paul thought it possible that he might live to the time of the general judgment.' And this I imagine to be really true, and what cannot be denied upon another principle the apostle lays down, viz. that the time of the day of judgment is absolutely uncertain, and that it will come suddenly and unexpected. The certainty of a future judgment God hath absolutely and plainly revealed; but the season when that judgment was to commence, when Christ should appear in the clouds of heaven, was known only to God; and with respect to angels and men, was the most entire and absolute uncertainty. For any thing the apostle could determine, it might happen in his own time; he might be one of those who should survive till Christ's second appearance. And therefore the apostle rightly says, inclusive of himself, and the christians of that age, *We who are alive and remain till the appearance of Christ*, because it was certain many would survive that day; and it was possible in the nature of things, and as to any thing he knew to the contrary, that he and they might be of that number. Had he indeed positively asserted, that this day of Christ should actually come in his own time, and that he himself should survive to the judgment-day, this would have been an evident mistake, that would have admitted nothing to excuse it. But the speaking of himself, and those of his own time, in such language only as denoted their own uncertainty about the season of Christ's appearance, and the possibility, as to any thing they knew to the contrary, of their being alive at the coming of it; this implies not the least error or mistake of judgment, but was speaking of the thing really as it was, and teaching those he wrote to, to keep themselves always ready for this important event, as those who certainly knew it would one day infallibly take place, and who could not tell how soon it might actually overtake them.

And in this sense we may still use the same language, and say, *We who are alive, and survive unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent those who are asleep*; not as hereby asserting, that we shall certainly live to see this coming of Christ, because this would be (contrary to the very supposition of its uncertainty) to determine the very time and season of it as certain; but only intimating, that

* Herodian. Τον δὲ περιλαλεῖμενον. *Alter superstes*. Lycurg. Orat. p. 153. 12a

it is not impossible but that it may be so; which supposes that the exact season *when*, is a matter unrevealed to us and unknown by us; otherwise the matter would be no longer either ways a supposition, but a thing determined and fixed.

Whether we shall be amongst the number of those who survive to this day or not, and who by this means shall escape the common lot of death, yet it is evident many such there will be: the passage before us plainly supposes it, and the apostle elsewhere asserts it, when he tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 51. *We shall not all sleep, i. e. die, but we shall be all changed.* Those who shall be found alive at the coming of the day of Christ shall not put off their bodies by death, but be clothed upon, and transformed into life and immortality without it.

However, they *shall not prevent those that are asleep*, i. e. 'those who have died before the coming of this day.' Though they are to be transformed without death, yet this glorious transformation shall not take place before the resurrection of those that have died in Christ; so that those who are alive at Christ's coming, *shall not prevent those who are asleep*, i. e. 'shall not go before those who are dead, to glory; shall not be transformed before the dead are recovered to life; shall not meet the Lord in the air, before those who are dead are raised up, and so fitted to partake of the same blessedness.' This is the meaning of the original word*, which we render *prevent*, and by which our translators meant, not so to *prevent*, as to *hinder*, which is the general meaning of the word *prevent* in our language; but, not so to *prevent* as to anticipate others, or to obtain any advantage or benefit before them; in which sense the apostle here asserts, that they *who are alive at Christ's coming shall not prevent*, i. e. 'shall not have the advantage of being raised up to meet the Lord in the air, any thing sooner than those who are dead before it.' For thus the apostle adds a particular account of the manner in which this solemn event shall be carried on; viz.

T E X T.

Verses 16, 17. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

visible glory of the invisible God discovers itself; he shall descend from thence into these lower regions of the air, which is the scene fixed on for this grand and important solemnity.

And in order to encrease the majesty and awe of this appearance, the apostle tells us, *He shall descend from heaven with a shout.* The original word, we render *shout*, seems to denote in general, a noise or shout, to excite and stir up another to

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Having suffered the death of the cross, he ascended into heaven, far above all principalities and powers; and the heavens must retain him, till the season fixed in the eternal counsels of God comes on for the restoration of all things. Then shall he once more leave the mansions of his Father's glory; not indeed to appear a second time *in the form of a servant*, and as a *man of sorrows*, but in a splendor, pomp, and majesty, worthy the high character and dignity of the universal judge. He shall descend from heaven, the highest heavens, where he now is seated on his Father's right hand, and where the

action. Hence it is particularly used of the noise by which mariners, and rowers aboard a ship, prompted one another to labour and diligence; and of the shout of soldiers, to encourage and inspire each other with resolution, when going to engage the enemy. And in a similar sense the apostle seems to use the word in the place before us. *The Lord shall descend to this universal judgment with a shout.* It is a beautiful and lively passage in Job, where God is introduced as declaring, that *he fastened the foundations of the earth, and laid the corner-stone thereof*; and as representing, that on this solemn occasion, *the stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* Solemn processions and appearances, great events, and remarkable transactions, are frequently introduced by, and attended with loud acclamations and joyful shouts of the spectators. And as no event can well be of greater importance than this descent of Christ to the judgment of the world, nothing seems to me to be a more probable meaning of *his descending with a shout*, than his descending amidst the acclamations of the angels of God, hailing him on this grand occasion, congratulating his advancement to this high dignity, and following him with their friendly and chearful wishes of victory and success; like soldiers shouting for joy around their victorious general marching amidst their ranks in stately triumph; or like faithful subjects, receiving their prince with loudest acclamations, upon seeing him appear in all his robes of solemn majesty, and marching in solemn procession, impartially to distribute judgment and justice respectively to his subjects.

This appears to me to be the most probable meaning of the expression. It is indeed capable of another sense, and *the shout* spoken of may refer, not to the acclamations of the angels around the person of Christ, but to the voice of Christ himself. *The Lord himself shall descend with a shout.* He shall come from heaven, and utter his voice, that shall pierce into the regions of the dead, and immediately inspire them with a new life; according to what our Lord himself declares, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,* John v. 25. But tho' this explication conveys a sense agreeable to other places of scripture, yet I greatly prefer the former, which refers the shout to the acclamations of the heavenly host, not only because it conveys a strong and lively image, suitable to the awful majesty of the Son of God, descending to the judgment of the world; but because the original word doth certainly denote the noise or shout of a company or multitude, rather than the voice of a single person.

The apostle adds, *He shall descend from heaven, as with a shout, so with the voice of the archangel.* We read frequently in the Revelations, of angels, and mighty angels, proclaiming with a loud voice the great and important events that are there spoken of as about to take place. Thus, a mighty angel came down from heaven, and *swore by the living God, that time should be no longer,* Rev. x. 1. 6. When the Lamb stood on Mount Zion, an angel fled in the midst of heaven, with the everlasting gospel, saying with a loud voice, *Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come,* Rev. xiv. 6, 7. And in that grand description of the coming of Christ, Rev. xix. 11, &c. where his eyes are represented as a flame of fire, his head adorned with many crowns, his vesture as dipped in blood, his proper name called, *the Word of God*, and on his vesture and his thigh his titles written, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*; an angel is described as standing in the sun, and crying with a loud voice, *Come and gather yourselves unto the supper of the great God.* Agreeable to these representations of St. John

seems to be this of St. Paul, that Christ *shall descend with the voice of the archangel*. The whole host of heaven shall attend him with their shouts, and some mighty archangel shall go before him, as his harbinger, to proclaim the solemnity of the universal judgment.

It is, I know, the opinion of some, that the archangel here is Christ himself. He shall *descend with the voice of the archangel*, i. e. 'He, the archangel, when he descends to judgment, shall utter his voice, and call the dead before him.' And as Michael the archangel is said to be the only one who hath this high title given him in scripture, so called by Jude in the 9th verse of his epistle, Christ and Michael are supposed to be the same person. I confess nothing appears to me to be more precarious and improbable than this supposition. It supposes that there is but one archangel, viz. Michael, a supposition wholly void of proof, and certainly contrary to the opinion of the most ancient Jews. For in that noble and ancient book, called apocryphal, the second book of Esdras, chap. 4. ver. 36. Uriel is expressly called an archangel; and as the heavenly hierarchy is divided into principalities and powers, and mights and dominions, into cherubim and seraphim, nothing is more probable than that each order hath its head or prince, or proper archangel; the meaning of which title is no more, than the presiding or governing angel. Or if this title of arch or prince angel is given, upon account of the charge they were entrusted with over the particular kingdoms of the earth, as seems extremely probable to me, rather than from any superior rank they held in heaven, then even the scripture mentions more than one arch or prince angel. For we read in Daniel, chap. x. ver. 13. 21. of "the prince of the kingdom of Persia;" and of "Michael, the prince of the Jews," who is there expressly said to be, but "one of the chief or first princes;" i. e. 'one of the arch or princely angels;' i. e. 'one of those angels to whom God committed in some respects the care of the kingdoms and nations of the earth.' And it is worth remarking, that in this very passage of Daniel, the Greek interpreters call Michael, and the angel of Persia, expressly *Ἀρχόντες*, arches, chiefs, princes, which, when joined to the word angel, is nothing more or less than an archangel. And as Michael is by them styled, *εἰς τῶν ἀρχόντων*, one of those arches, chiefs, or princes, the notion of there being but one archangel hath, I think, nothing certain or solid to support it. And I apprehend this single observation is abundantly sufficient to shew, that little stress is to be laid on the notion of Christ's being the same with Michael the archangel, since the very foundation on which it is built, viz. there being but one archangel, hath in reality nothing to support it. I will only add,

That there is no single intimation in the New Testament, of Christ and Michael being the same person. Michael is mentioned but once, and that in an affair that doth not seem at all suitable to the dignity of him, who was originally *the Word of God*, and *by whom the Father created all things*, viz. as "contending and disputing with the devil about the body of Moses," Jude 9. Such a dispute and contention was natural enough between spirits originally of the same rank and condition; but I think unworthy to be managed or engaged in by him, *by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*, and who therefore must be by nature superior to angels; though upon some accounts even the angels might also well be called *his fellows*, tho' that English word very ill expresses the meaning of the original one. The sense, therefore, of the expression, *He shall descend*

scend with the voice of the archangel, or, as the words should be rendered, because the emphatical article is wanting, 'with the voice of an archangel,' seems to me plainly this; that as, when he was coming to preach the gospel on earth, John, his forerunner, was sent to cry out, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths strait*; so when he shall come to judge mankind by the everlasting gospel, some one of the princes or chiefs of the angels of God shall with a loud voice proclaim his advent, and bid the living prepare for judgment. And finally,

He shall descend from heaven with the trump of God. Amongst the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, solemn assemblies were called together by the sound of trumpet. Yea, God himself is represented as appearing with two of the circumstances mentioned in this passage. God, saith the psalmist, *is gone up with a shout: Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet*, Psal. xlvii. 5. When the law was given from Sinai, the noise of the trumpet was so dreadful, as made the people afraid, almost to death, Exod. xx. 18, 19. And we find in the Revelations, that almost all the principal events are there represented as ushered in by sound of trumpet. Agreeable to these accounts, this descent of Christ to judgment shall be proclaimed *by the voice of an archangel, and by the trump of God*; i. e. 'by that trump, that proclaims in a peculiar manner the approach and presence of God himself; and that is especially appropriated to this sacred use;' for the expression here, of *the trump of God*, seems to be emphatical, and to denote one peculiarly reserved for this grand solemnity, and that should effectually signify to the world the awful majesty and supreme authority of God himself.

The judgment thus proclaimed and ushered in, *the dead in Christ shall rise first*. This judgment is to be universal, and therefore the dead must be restored to life; and first of all those who *have died in Christ*, i. e. in the profession of his religion; who have been faithful to the death in their adherence to him, lived in a constant obedience to his commands, and died in the firm belief of his second appearance. *They shall rise first*, before the judgment shall commence, or the saints of God, who shall then be alive, shall receive their heavenly transformation.

When the dead saints of God are thus raised, then *we which are alive and remain*, all such faithful Christians as survive to this awful season, even we ourselves, if we live to see it, for the particular time is absolutely uncertain, *shall be caught up together with them*, viz. with the saints of God who are raised from the dead. The original word signifies, *snatched up*, and denotes a kind of violence and swiftness. We that are then living, and they who were before dead, but now restored to life, shall both together, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*, be snatched up from off this earth, by the irresistible power of God, and saved from those flames which shall then involve it in universal ruins.

"We shall be snatched up together," not, as we render it, *in the clouds*, but, more emphatically, *in clouds*, as in triumphal chariots. God himself is represented as making the *clouds his chariots*, Psal. civ. 3. And when our Lord ascended into heaven, *a cloud received him out of his disciples sight*, Acts i. 9. In the same stately and triumphant manner shall the living, and the raised dead saints of God, be snatched away from the destruction of this globe, and conveyed into the presence of their Lord. For,

"They shall be snatched up *in clouds into the air to meet the Lord*." The process of this universal judgment shall be carried on in the superior regions above us, between heaven, properly so called, and our earth. The Son of man shall be seen *coming in the clouds of heaven*, as our Lord himself expresses it. And here all his saints shall meet him, receive his final approbation, and be the joyful witnesses
of

of his power and glory, in the destruction of all the implacable enemies of God and goodness. And in order to their being rendered capable of ascending into these heavenly regions, the dead that are raised shall be raised in glory and power, with spiritual bodies, and in incorruption; the saints who are then living shall all be changed, and all that is mortal in them shall put on immortality. So that the dead being raised with, and the living being transformed into spiritual and immortal bodies, they shall both swiftly rise in clouds of glory, and be safely conducted into those regions of the air, where they shall joyfully meet the Lord. The apostle closes this grand account by adding:

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Being acquitted by him in judgment, and solemnly acknowledged as his genuine disciples, we shall be pronounced worthy of the kingdom of God, and to dwell in the divine glory with Christ himself; to be with him the everlasting partakers of that happiness and joy, which are in the presence of God, and at his right hand, and which last for evermore; agreeable to the prayer of our Lord himself, when on earth, for his disciples, that *where he was, they might be also, to behold his glory*; and to that general assurance, which he gave to all that should believe in him: *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands,* John x. 29.

Having thus given a particular account of this important affair, he draws the proper inference, for which the whole was designed:

T E X T.

Ver. 18. *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The original word denotes both *to exhort and comfort*, and the subject may well be improved to both. *Exhort one another with these words*, viz. to a steady perseverance in christianity; and surely there can be no stronger motive to this constancy and fidelity, than the assurance of so glorious a resurrection, if we die before the coming of Christ, and of so blessed a transformation, if we survive till his appearance.

Comfort also one another with these words, over your departed relations, that are dead in Jesus; they are rather asleep than dead: for they are not shut up under everlasting death. Neither death nor the grave shall have long dominion over them. They only rest from their labours and dangers: and should we lament over them, when they thus slumber in peace? or sorrow for them, as those that are without hope, when we have even the full assurance from the resurrection of Christ, that they shall awake immortal in the morning of the resurrection, and that even those of the saints of God, who shall be alive at his appearance, shall not go before them who are dead, to meet the Lord; but wait until they are restored to life, and so be alltogether carried in clouds of glory, to present themselves before the Lord, who shall approve their fidelity, and command them for ever to dwell in, and partake of his joy. *Comfort yourselves with these words*, under the consideration of your own mortality; as those who firmly believe, that *when he who is your life shall appear, you also shall appear*

pear with him in glory; and that you shall be like him, when you shall see him as he is.

The apostle having given them this particular account of the resurrection, and of the circumstances attending the second appearance of Christ in order to accomplish it, and spoken of it in such terms as might seem to imply, at least, a possibility, that some of them might live till that day actually came: proceeds to prevent any ill use that might be made of what he had delivered, by representing to them the absolute uncertainty of the exact time and season when it should take place, and for that reason the indispensable necessity of their living in a constant habitual preparation for it.

T E X T.

C H A P. V.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 1, 2. *But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you: for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*

And in Daniel it is said, that God changeth the times and the seasons, the periods and revolutions of kingdoms, and the exact seasons of their rise and fall, Dan. ii. 21. And thus our Lord himself tells his disciples, *it doth not belong to you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*, Acts i. 7. i. e. 'neither the general periods nor the particular seasons, when the great events of providence, in the rise or fall of states and kingdoms, were to take place.' When therefore the apostle tells the Thessalonians, that he had no need to write to them about the times and seasons; he must be understood to refer to the subject he had been treating of before, and means, that it was needless for him to speak of either that general period of time, when the day of the Lord should come; whether the present or ensuing age; or in what particular part of the age this solemn appearance should take place. And the reason he alledges is: *Because you yourselves know perfectly*, 'I have in person, whilst I was present with you, plainly and openly informed you,'

That the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, 2 Pet. iii. 10. This expression, which is used by St. Peter, is taken from what our Lord himself says on the same subject. *Know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief had come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken up*, Matt. xxiv. 43. And the expression evidently points out these three things. 1. That no one could actually determine the time, when this day would actually come, the coming of a thief to break up any particular house, being an absolute uncertainty; it may be this night, or a very distant period of time: and thus our Lord himself explains it to the angel of the church of Sardis:.

Sardis: *I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*, Rev. iii. 3. It denotes that the coming of this day should be *unexpected*, and at a season when least thought of, and looked for; thieves loving to act by surprise, and making their attempts where they are least expected. This sense also Christ himself points us to. Thus the application Christ makes of that forementioned passage, *Had the good man of the house known in what watch the thief would have come*, Matt. xxiv. 44. is, *therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh*; at such a season as men will least think of or expect him. And in the third place, that it should come upon mankind, when they imagined themselves in a state of full security, and almost wholly out of danger of its overtaking them; thieves generally making their attempts in the dead of night, when persons are fast asleep, and wholly secure, and void of fear, of any danger befalling them. And this circumstance the apostle himself leads us to; *when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them*, verse 3. These things are expressly mentioned, and naturally implied in the similitude. And we may from hence observe,

That the apostle, when he speaks of himself and others then living, as possible to be alive at the coming of the Lord, yet could never intend to assert, that they actually should live until the coming of that day. For this would be expressly to contradict what he had told the Thessalonians when with them, and what he immediately subjoins in this very letter, to the account he had given of it. As indeed the time of it was to him and them an absolute uncertainty, it might come in his and their time, for any thing he or they knew to the contrary; and for the same reason might be deferred for years and ages to come, as in fact it hath happened; as the coming of a thief to any particular person's house may be this night, or some very distant season: and therefore as it became the Thessalonian converts to be always prepared and ready, that the coming of it might not surprise them, so it became the apostle to excite them to an habitual thought of, and preparation for it, and to speak of it in terms of uncertainty, and as an event, which, because he knew not the exact period of its approach, might for that reason come in his or their time, for any thing he or they could determine to the contrary; and, I think, upon the whole, this is so far from being an argument of the apostle's being mistaken, or any reflection upon his authority and inspiration, that it is rather a proof of his integrity and prudence; in that he plainly acknowledges he had no revelation in this article, and expressly told the Thessalonian converts, it was a matter that he was not able to determine, and that how certain soever this appearance of Christ was, the exact time of it was known only to God. And the words that follow, are a farther illustration of this:

T E X T.

Ver. 3. *For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

*When they shall say, peace and safety**. When mankind, especially the unthinking sensual part of the world, shall promise themselves *peace*, i. e. 'continued prosperity, and safety,' i. e. 'the full security' of

* *Supple est, inquit Grotius, quod subauditur more Hebræorum. Addi potuisset, more etiam Græcorum.*

woman with child, and they shall not escape. of their happiness, and the continuance of the present state of things; when, as St. Peter expresses it, they shall cry out, scoffingly: *Where is the*

promise of his coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2 Pet. iii. 4. When they shall ridicule the christian expectation of it as an idle vain superstition; *then sudden destruction comes upon them.* The apostle speaks of it in the present tense, *destruction comes upon them,* because he uses the language of wicked men in these times, and as it were carries us forward to the season, when it shall happen, Herodian. l. iii. c. 12. §. 11. The original word *ολεθρος* means, punishment that shall issue in their intire destruction, in which sense the word is frequently used by profane writers. The vengeance of God in the final punishment of their sins shall overtake them, in the midst of all their promised security and happiness, when they imagined themselves to be wholly out of danger. It shall come on them both suddenly, and certainly. This very circumstance is also taken notice of by our Lord himself, from whom I doubt not but the apostle had it: *As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be,* Mat. xxiv. 39, 40. viz. certain and unexpected. And this the apostle illustrates by adding, that their punishment should come on them, *as travail upon a woman with child;* whereby the severity, the suddenness, and irresistibleness of their destruction is clearly pointed out: and therefore the apostle himself applies the similitude: *and they shall not escape.* The expression is defective, and must be supplied with a word out of the foregoing sentence: *they shall not escape the punishment and destruction prepared for them.*

But though the punishment of wicked men should thus suddenly overwhelm them, at a season when they imagined themselves free from danger, yet saith the apostle to his Thessalonians:

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 4, 5. *Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness.* The apostle here persists in the same similitude of a thief's breaking up an house in the dead and darkness of the night, and of wicked men's being as unexpectedly surprised by the coming of the day of the Lord, as though they were sleeping at midnight with the utmost security, and fearlessness of danger. But, ye brethren, are not in darkness; with you it is no longer night; the darkness of your ignorance is over; *the day-spring from on high hath visited you,* so that that day cannot overtake you as a thief, cannot overtake you by surprise, whilst you are sleeping in security, and without any thought or apprehension of the approach of it. Thieves do not generally break up houses by day light. This is no time for stealth and surprise, when persons are awake and on their guard, and in the proper posture of defence. In like manner, as ignorance, stupidity and vice is darkness and night in a spiritual or moral sense, in which men have no thoughts or fears of a day of future reckoning and account, the approach of such a day must be to them a perfect surprise, and the judgment it brings with it be more dreadful and ruinous, in proportion as it is sudden and unexpected. But as

christianity hath awakened and enlightened us, we are no longer in darkness, and so in no danger of being surprised, as a thief surprises men in the sleep of night, by the unlooked-for appearance of this awful day. *Ye are all children of the light, and children of the day.* The expression, *the children of the light and day*, is a form of speech usual amongst the Hebrews; but not so peculiar to them, as to be wholly unknown to the politer Greeks and Romans. Pindar * calls ‘good laws, justice and peace, the golden daughters of Themis, or righteousness; the rains of heaven, daughters of the clouds; the day, the son of the sun; wine, the son of the vine.’ And in all these instances, and others, that might be mentioned, it may be observed, that that of which any other thing is said to be the son or daughter, or child, is in some respect the cause of it. The sun is the cause of day, the vine of the wine that flows from it, and so in the other instances. In like manner christians are the sons or children of the light and the day, i. e. as St. Peter expresses it, *born of the incorruptible word of God*, formed as christians in their principles, tempers, and lives by the heavenly light of gospel truth. What they are as christians, they are by the day-light of sacred knowledge. Light is properly the parent and original of every christian as such. And therefore the apostle adds, inclusive of himself and all christians: *We are not of the night or of darkness*, or in general, as the sentence should have been supplied: *we are not children of the night, nor of the darkness*; ‘we are not formed into a stupid thoughtless temper, we are not educated in vice and wickedness by ignorance and error.’ And from hence the apostle draws the proper inference and conclusion:

T E X T.

Ver. 6, 7, 8. *Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

the night, let us not sleep as do others. The day is not made for sleep, but for watchfulness and labour, and it is somewhat indecent and unnatural to waste away the day in unactive slumbers. Therefore let us not, as christians, *sleep as do others.* Sleep is here taken in the figurative sense, to denote the thoughtless, in-

C O M M E N T A R Y.

How natural is this exhortation! how just the inference from the foregoing account, and how beautifully carried on in the same strain of figurative expressions!

‘We are, as christians, *children of the day and not of the night*,’ where, by a figure common to the best writers, *day and night*, two opposites and contraries in nature, and which perpetually divide the natural world, represent the two great contrarieties of the moral world, those of *knowledge and ignorance*; these being to the mind what the others are to the body, and attended with consequences, which bear a very near resemblance to those which are produced by them. ‘If then we are not *children of*

the night, let us not sleep as do others. The day is not made for sleep, but for watchfulness and labour, and it is somewhat indecent and unnatural to waste away the day in unactive slumbers. Therefore let us not, as christians, *sleep as do others.* Sleep is here taken in the figurative sense, to denote the thoughtless, in-

* Εὐνομία, καὶ συνέστασις τε Διὸς, καὶ ὁμοτροπία εἰρᾶς.

Χρυσῆαι Παιδὲς Ἑστῆς Θεμίδος. Olym. xiii. 11.

Οὐρανίων ὑδάτων Ὀμβρίων παιδὸν Νεφέλας. Ol. xi. 2. 3.

Ἀσυχίμον ἀμείραν παιδὸς Ἀλίου. Ol. ii. 59.

αὐτὸν ἀνὴρ ἀμείραν παιδὸς. Nem. ix. 123.

dolent, careless, secure, and fearless temper of mind, which is the condition of persons oppressed with natural sleep. Such a state is highly unbecoming the character of a christian, and unsuitable to that clear light, that full day of knowledge which he enjoys by the gospel. *But let us watch, and be sober: let us watch;* keep our minds awake, and in a vigorous attention to our duty and interest, that we may more effectually guard against any surprise, and prevent every danger we may possibly be exposed to. Let us *be sober* also as well as awake, take heed of indulging any criminal excesses of intemperance and luxury, which render men regardless of danger, and incapable of guarding against it.' And this advice the apostle illustrates, by appealing to the common custom and practice of mankind.

They that sleep, sleep in the night. They follow the order and plain dictate of nature, by indulging to their repose at that season which she points out for it, when she spreads her mantle of darkness over the face of the world, and thereby invites men to close their eyes, and to enjoy their rest. He adds (what I wish was universally true in our times) *and they that are drunken are drunken in the night;* drunkenness is so scandalous an abuse of human nature, that it is properly a work of darkness; and there was so much decency left even amongst the heathens themselves, that they reserved this debauchery for the darkness of night, to conceal it from the view of others: and therefore, as christians enjoy a perpetual day of sacred light and knowledge, indolence, and thoughtlessness, and all instances of intemperance and debauchery, are in them scandalous and unnatural, and contrary to the plainest indications of the providence and grace of God.

And this perpetual watchfulness and sobriety was the more necessary on the part of christians, because of the peculiar dangers to which their profession exposed them. They were to consider themselves as engaged in an hazardous warfare, against very powerful and subtle enemies, in which their utmost caution, vigilance, sobriety, and diligence would be found absolutely necessary to their safety, and in whom the want of these virtues would be as truly criminal, and in its consequences as certainly destructive, as in a soldier dissolved in sleep, or enfeebled by drunkenness, who thereby becomes a certain prey to an enemy, that watches for the proper opportunity to surprise him. Therefore the apostle adds:

Let us, who are the children of the day, be sober; vigilant, and wakeful, ever temperate and free from all dissolute excesses, that our nerves may not be unbraced, nor our strength dissolved; nor our enemy surprise us when we are unprovided to resist him. Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. The breast-plate and helmet were two capital pieces of the ancient armour, and worn for the safety of those parts, where a wound was easiest and soonest mortal; and how truly invulnerable and secure will these two parts of the christian armour render those who constantly wear them? *The breast-plate* we are to put on is that *of faith and love:* faith in God and Christ, and the happiness and glory of a future state; mixed with a sincere and fervent charity and love to all mankind; these are the precious ingredients of which this part of the christian armour is composed. This is a breast-plate of a truly heavenly make, and formed of infinitely nobler materials than silver and gold; and with how much judgment and propriety is it chosen? The breast, *the heart* is the proper seat of all the animal passions and affections,

the source of all concupiscence and desire, which dictates those innumerable lusts and criminal indulgences, which are inconsistent with christian vigilancy, activity, fortitude, and resolution. And what care is necessary to preserve the heart safe and unhurt from the assaults of these fatal enemies! and what other breast-plate can guard and secure it, but that of faith in God, and universal charity to man? This will extinguish every unworthy affection, and destroy the influence which external objects may have to excite them, and preserve the breast pure and uncorrupt, amidst the most powerful temptations to defile and wound it.

But the *head* must be defended as well as the *heart*; the seat of imagination, as well as the fountain of desire; the source of contrivance and thought, as well as the spring of appetite and affection: and here *the hope of salvation* is the sure, the only helmet. When the glory and happiness of a future world hath a lively possession of the mind and imagination, and the thoughts are awakened to an attentive view of this substantial and eternal blessedness, the head will be comparatively free from all lesser cares; prospects of an inferior kind will lose their charms, and diminish in their worth, and the strong ambition which will possess us, will be that of approving ourselves to God, and securing that everlasting salvation, which is the promise and offer of the gospel of Christ; whereby the head will be effectually guarded, as reason will be preserved clear, the judgment firm, and strong, the thought regular, pure, and exalted, and all the faculties of the mind free from every weight and byass, that would enslave, pervert, or corrupt them. And that this hope of salvation may appear to be an helmet that every christian may put on, the apostle adds those glorious words, which are enough to revive the soul even in circumstances almost of the deepest despair.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 9, 10. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

He hath not appointed us to wrath by Christ. The word signifies to ordain, fix, and determine: God hath not ordained and determined us to wrath by the gospel of Christ; the immediate end of it is not the destruction of any man. The original design of Christ's coming into the world, was not to condemn it, and to be the dreadful minister of his Father's vengeance: No, it was a design of pure and unmixed mercy, and that he might be the glorious author of eternal redemption to all who would embrace the offer of it: *God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.* The gospel is God's decree of mercy, published for the benefit and encouragement of all without exception who will embrace it; the end of it is that we should obtain, and secure to ourselves eternal salvation.

For this end Christ died for us; offered himself as a propitiation for our sins, *that whether we wake, i. e. live till his second appearance, or sleep, i. e. die before his coming to judgment, we should live together with him;* if we survive to his coming, that we should be changed and transformed in our bodies, and if we die, be raised spiritual and incorruptible, so that we may be altogether capable of ascend-

* Vid. Schol. in Eurip. Hecub. ad vocem, *Συμμενω*. v. 299.

ing to meet him in the clouds, and after the conclusion of the final judgment, be allowed to dwell with him in his Father's kingdom and presence. As if he had said; it matters not, whether we live till his appearance, or die before it: The death of Christ is our security in both, and the end of it universally the same, viz. that all who believe in him may be made partakers of immortal life, and live for ever with him in his glory.

And having thus finished this important account, he draws the proper inference from it, and which every part of it hath a natural and direct tendency to promote, viz.

TEXT.

COMMENTARY.

Ver. 11. *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

The literal rendering is, *Wherefore comfort or exhort, the word signifying both: comfort, exhort one another, and build up every one the other, even as ye also do.* And therefore the meaning of the advice is,

Go on as ye have done, and continue to exhort, comfort, and edify one another with these important truths. The apostle entered on this subject, that they might not sorrow for their departed friends, as those who were without hope. What hope and assurance they had concerning them he hath largely shewn; and therefore he concludes the account, by directing them to, and pressing upon them, the proper and right improvement of it.

Exhort one another, viz. to steadfastness and perseverance, to watchfulness, sobriety, and active vigour; that whenever the day of the Lord shall come, it may not surprise you unawares.

Comfort one another. Put one another in mind of these important subjects, to alleviate your sorrows for those who are already dead, to support you under the sense of your own mortality, and to inspire your hearts with a joyful courage, under all your sufferings and persecutions for the gospel of Christ.

Edify one another even as ye also do. Commendation is a spur to ingenuous minds, and the apostle therefore praises them to excite them to perseverance. The word properly signifies *to build up*, and is here used in the figurative sense of it. Christians are as such *the temple of God*, and they become such, by the proper union of all those graces and virtues that enter into and form the christian character; and as these grow more towards perfection, and the number of them becomes compleat, like the polished stones of a regular and comely building; so this spiritual temple of God, grows proportionably more and more finished. *Edify therefore, build up one another*, means, 'help forward each other in your christian course; strive to perfect each other's graces, labour to promote in one another the practice of every christian virtue.' Awaken each other to watchfulness, temperance, and courage; inspire each other with joy and hope: in a word, do all you can to establish each other in faith and holiness, that *ye may be perfect in the whole will of God*, and defective in nothing, that is essential to the christian character, and necessary to your securing a glorious resurrection to life and immortality.

How useful and amiable would such kind of conversations be, when managed with a becoming seriousness and prudence! if christians would enter into each other's true interest, and endeavour all they could to promote it; if they would put vanity and folly, trifles and nonsense, calumny and slander, and all the other little

little arts, that engross so much of our time, and waste away so many precious minutes of this transitory and short life, quite out of countenance, by discourses of substantial worth, and by endeavouring to establish and fortify each other in the genuine principles of religion, against the snares of life, and the innumerable temptations that lie in wait to corrupt and ruin us : then should we prove indeed mutual blessings to each other, conversation would become our real honour and happiness ; and with what comfort should we meet and behold each other, at the resurrection of the great day, when the joyful reflection should then recur to our minds, that we managed our conversation to mutual advantage, and in some measure owe the glory that shall then invest us, to our serious concern for, and christian fidelity to, each other ! How would this endear christians to one another in the present world ! How will this remembrance enlarge the charity and love of the saints of God to each other in the future state, and tie them together by the sacred bonds of an indissoluble union and friendship !

The apostle having thus finished the main design of his letter, concludes the whole with some practical instructions and exhortations of great use and importance.

T E X T.

Ver. 12, 13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour amongst you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you : And to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace amongst yourselves.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The persons whom this advice regards, are described by a threefold character. *Those which labour amongst you. Those who are over you in the Lord. And those who admonish you.*

1. *Those which labour amongst you.* The original word is used to denote very different kind of services, each of them attended with labour and difficulty. (1.) The exercise of charity, as the effect of labour and industry. Thus St. Paul tells the bishops of Ephesus, *These hands have ministered to my necessities : I have shewed you, how that* SO LABOURING, i. e. 'working with your hands as I have done,' *you ought to support the weak,* Acts xx. 35. And this is, I think, the proper explication of those words, in the first chapter of this epistle, ver. 2, 3. where the apostle tells them, he remembered *their labour of love*, i. e. 'that labour and diligence in working with their hands, which they submitted to, through their affectionate love to their distressed brethren, that they might have wherewithal to assist and relieve them.' (2.) It is used to express that labour and diligence, which was practiced by pious christians, in the services they performed, and the kind offices they did to others, as occasion and opportunity offered themselves. Thus Rom. xvi. 6. the apostle salutes Mary, and at ver. 12. several other good women, who *bestowed much labour on him*, i. e. 'who begrudged no pains in serving him, or being assisting to him as a minister and an apostle of Christ.' And (3.) It is used in a peculiar manner to express the great diligence and pains of the first preachers of the gospel, in their endeavours to propagate the gospel and religion of Christ, and to gain over converts to the church of God. Thus St. Paul tells us of himself, *That the grace of God towards him was not in vain ; but he laboured*

more

more abundantly than they all, 1 Cor. xv. 10. i. e. 'took more pains, and used 'greater diligence in preaching and propagating the gospel, than all the rest of 'the apostles:' and what is yet more direct is, St. Paul's advice to Timothy; that those should *be counted worthy of double honour, who laboured in the word and doctrine*, 1 Tim. v. 17. who approved themselves faithful and diligent in preaching the great truths of the everlasting gospel. And in this sense, I think, the words are to be understood in the place before us, *Know them that labour amongst you, viz. in the word and doctrine*. And that this is the proper meaning will appear from

2. The second character here given, *Know them that labour amongst you, and are over you in the Lord*. These two very characters and in the same words, are put together by the apostle, in that forementioned place, 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well*, or, as the words should be rendered, *let the elders that preside well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*. So that they who laboured in preaching the gospel, and thus presided in the several christian churches, which the apostle gathered, were evidently the elders and bishops of it: and I think it is evident from these two places considered together, that those paraphrasts and commentators must be mistaken, who imagine, that there were no proper officers as yet in the church at Thessalonica. This supposition is, I think, evidently contradicted by this very character, of those *who were over them*, or, as the word signifies, *presided over them in the Lord*; an expression that evidently points out both office and dignity; and what their office was is as plainly expressed, in the words, *labouring amongst them, and admonishing them*. And as the apostle expressly calls these presiding labourers, elders, in his epistle to Timothy, I think we have abundant reason to conclude, that there were proper elders and bishops in the Thessalonian church.

The proper meaning of the original word, that we render, *which are over you*, is as we have observed, persons *who preside over others* *. No regular assemblies can be formed, or subsist, without proper presidents: no public worship especially can be carried on, according to the apostle's rule, *decently and in order*, unless some persons are appointed as heads, and ministers to carry on the service; and it is evident from the nature of the thing, as well as from the meaning of the word, that the president of an assembly, though in some respects he is the proper head of it, yet in others is the common minister of it; and that his powers, as president, are and must be confined to the particular nature of that service, which is to be managed and directed by that assembly over which he presides. And the presidency here spoken of seems to be expressly confined, when the apostle adds, *In the Lord*: Those who *preside over you in the Lord*, i. e. 'either according to Christ's appointment, and whose powers therefore could reach no farther than his grant and 'commission; or, in the affairs of christianity, who preside in the work of the 'Lord, in preaching the gospel, converting men to the faith, and establishing 'those who are already converted.' And this seems to me to be the proper meaning of the expression, "presiding in the Lord," viz. being peculiarly appointed to and set over the work of converting men to, and establishing them in, the faith of Christ, because these presidents were labourers in the word and doctrine, and their proper office is farther described by the apostle

* Ælian. V. H. x. 17.

In the third place, by the expression of such *as admonish you*. The word properly signifies to advise, and exhort, to put in mind of duty, to excite to it by way of admonition and counsel, and to reprove for errors and faults; it is a word that denotes both affection and authority; and the duty that is implied in it is common to all christians. *Ye are filled with all knowledge*, says the apostle to the Romans, xv. 14. *able to admonish one another*; and when they do this, it ought to be with the gentleness and tenderness of a brother. *Count him not an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*, 2 Theff. iii. 15. But it in a more especial manner belongs, by way of character and office, to the presiding elders of christian societies, who labour in the word and doctrine; and whose admonitions, when properly given, ought to be with great affection and concern, and have a real and just authority attending them. Thus St. Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 14. *As my beloved sons I warn you*, or admonish you with the authority and concern of a father for his children's welfare: and thus in the place before us, the presidents that laboured amongst them were to admonish them, to warn and caution, to reprove and exhort them, by virtue of their station, and with an authority becoming their rank and character.

The duty of the Thessalonians towards these presiding labourers, whose office was to teach and admonish them, is also described by three different expressions: *Know them that labour amongst you; esteem them very highly in love; and be at peace amongst them*.

Know them: Εἰδέναι. The word is sometimes used * to signify more than bare knowledge; for the Thessalonians could not but know who were the presidents of their assemblies, viz. to consider persons with a becoming reverence and respect: so that knowing those who labour amongst them, is so to apprehend the dignity of their office, so to consider the usefulness of their service, as to pay them a suitable reverence and proper regard.

They are also to *esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake* †. The literal version is, *To have them more abundantly in love*. The reverence they were to pay them was to proceed from affection, and they were to cherish a more abundant and warm affection towards them upon account of *their work*, i. e. to esteem and love them in a peculiar manner, for the sake of the pains they took in preaching the gospel, and for their fidelity and tenderness in admonishing them. So that the respect, esteem, and affection due to the elders and bishops of the christian church, is founded, not so much upon the dignity of their character as presidents, as upon their zeal and diligence in preaching the gospel, and warning and admonishing those, who are under their inspection. And finally,

The apostle exhorts them to *be at peace one with another*, or, as some ancient copies, versions, and interpreters read it, *Be at peace amongst them*, viz. amongst those who are your presidents and instructors; despise not their persons, do not quarrel with them upon account of the admonitions they give you, but by a peaceable and orderly behaviour, make their work and service easy and comfortable to them.

* Εἰδέναι. Εφοβείτο. Hesych. Οὐδὲ θεῶν οὐκ εἰδότες. Neque Deorum iram veriti. Hesiod. Epy. v. 187.

† Ηγείσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἐκ περισσεύειν ἀγάπῃ. Iloc.

Or if we retain the common reading, *Be at peace amongst yourselves*, the meaning will be; cultivate a friendly disposition, and peaceable temper, and carriage one towards another, and hereby shew your reverence and affection towards those who labour amongst you, and the submission and regard you pay to their admonitions and instructions.

After these exhortations to a suitable behaviour towards their instructors, the apostle lays down several very excellent ones for their own christian conduct, and their behaviour one towards another.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 14. *We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.*

The word *ατακτος*, which we render *unruly*, is properly a military term, and originally denotes a 'soldier that breaks his rank', deserts his post, and 'hereby neglects his duty.' Hence it is frequently used to signify any person, who behaves unbecoming his station and character, and neglects the duties of his proper office and situation in life: so that in the place before us it signifies one 'that doth not behave according to the rules of the gospel, that lives an irregular dissolute life †,' that acts contrary to his obligations as a christian, and doth not mind those particular duties, which his relation to the christian church, and his particular circumstances in life call for, and render necessary. Who these disorderly persons were, the apostle expressly points out, 2 Theff. iii. 11. *We hear there are some which walk amongst you disorderly, and who these are he explains by adding, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.* For persons who are poor to be idle and slothful, and turn impertinent and curious about other people's affairs, is to go out of their proper rank and station, to desert their post of duty, and to become chargeable with a very criminal negligence, and dangerous unfaithfulness to God, who hath appointed their condition, and their work. These the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to warn; or, as the word is rendered in ver. 12. to admonish, i. e. 'to put them in mind of their sin, to represent to them the danger of it, and to excite them by proper motives and arguments to return to their station and their duty: Not indeed to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother, 2 Theff. iii. 15. Again,

Comfort the feeble-minded ‡. The literal rendering of the word is, *those of little minds or souls.* The Greek interpreters of the Old Testament render this word by, what in the Hebrew is, *the humble in spirit.* *I will dwell with him who is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble §, Isa. lvii. 15.* Grotius explains the word, by "those who are dejected in spirit under adversity ||." Aristotle in his Ethics ** gives, I think, the natural and genuine meaning of it: "The little person, is one, who is to be considered not as an evil, but mistaken person: for, says he, though he be really worthy of good things, yet he deprives himself of those benefits he is worthy of; and this character hath some

* Οι μεν Καρχηδονιοι οχλω πλειους ησαν, ατακτοι δε κη πολεμικων εργων απαιδευτοι. Herod. vii. 9, 10.

† Το ατακτον is intemperance. Aelian. V. H. l. 14. c. 48. Ατακτος βιος is a disorderly, dissolute manner of living. Φασιν εν ατακτω κη θηριωδει βιω καθεστωτας. Diod. Sic. p. 8. D. Sic Plutarch. Quæst. Rom. p. 272. c. οπως εβιζωνται μη θηριωδως μηδε ατακτως, αλλα μετ' ευλαβειας ταις ηδοναις προσφερεισθαι.

‡ Παραμυθεισθε τες ολιγοψυχες. Hesych. Ολιγοψυχισα. Μικροψυχισα.

§ Ολιγοψυχοις διδως μακροθυμιαν.

|| Qui in adversis animo sunt dejecto, Grot. in loc.

** Arist. de Mor. l. 4. c. 9. ο μεν μικροψυχος, αξιος ων αγαθων, εαυτον αποστειρει, &c.

"mixture of blame in it, in that he judges himself unworthy, through ignorance of his own state." So that the little-minded person is one, who hath a mistaken opinion of himself, and indulges worse thoughts of his own condition than he ought to do: **probably** some of the christian converts had been notorious sinners, and were ready to be oppressed with fear and sorrow, upon account of their former state; or, as the apostle expresses it, in danger of being *swallowed up, quite dejected*, and borne down *with over much sorrow*, 2 Cor. ii. 7.: or some of them might be apprehensive that they should never be able to stand the shock of persecution, and fear lest they should fall away in the day of trial; or appear disheartened, and anxious for, and distrustful of, their own safety, upon account of some affliction or other, which they either dreaded or experienced: and this character agrees well with the exhortation *to comfort them*. The *unruly* were to be *warned* and admonished; but the *feeble*, the *little-minded* were to be supported, strengthened, and comforted, by proper arguments and motives derived from the providence of God, and promises of his grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Farther,

Support the weak *. The original word, we render *support*, sometimes signifies, to stick close to any thing, so as not to be removed from it †: sometimes it signifies to embrace ‡; sometimes it denotes to assist, to succour, to take care of, to defend and preserve §: either of these senses suit the place: "adhere to the weak, never forsake them; embrace them with a friendly affection; and do all you can to assist, succour, and defend them". The weak, who are to be thus supported, are either such as are infirm, and sickly (in which sense the word is frequently used in the New Testament, and other writings ||) or such who are of weak consciences and judgments concerning indifferent things, and christian liberty **: each of these are to be supported and assisted according to their different necessities and circumstances. Again,

Be patient towards all men. The literal rendering is, *Be long-suffering towards all*, i. e. "whatever be the afflictions, or weaknesses, or failings, or even sins of those that are amongst you, or with whom you may converse; be not hasty and severe in your censures on them; but exercise that patience and forbearance towards all men, that may most effectually tend to their relief and ease, and to the reclaiming them from their errors and mistakes."

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 15. *See, that none render evil for evil unto any man.* See: the original word frequently denotes, *Take heed* ††, *beware*, that no man render evil for evil to any man. The maxim of the corrupt Jews was, *Love your friend, and hate your enemy*, Mat. v. 43. and the same sentiment prevailed amongst many, not all of the heathens †††; in consequence of which enmity, they greedily returned injury for injury, and requited one injustice with another.

* ΑΝΤΕΧΕΘΕ ΤΩΝ ΑΔΕΛΩΝ.

† ΑΝΤΕΧΘΕ ΣΥ ΤΩΝ ΘΥΓΩΝ. *Ita adhere foribus, ut ab iis te avelli non sinas.* Arist. Lyfist. v. 161. Ανθεξεται σε των πατρων χρηματων. *Adharebit tibi, ita ut non excutias, propter paternam hereditatem.* Id. in Avib. v. 1657. αντεχεσθαι των δοθεισων επιδων. *Spei datæ inhæerere.* Diod. Sic. p. 111. l. 3.

‡ ΑΝΤΕΧΕΘΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑΣ. *Amplecti libertatem.* Diod. Sic. p. 111. A.

§ ΑΝΤΕΧΕΤΑΙ. Αντιλαμβάνεται, φροντίζει, περιποιείται. Hesych.

|| ΑΔΕΛΗΣ, αρρωστος. Hesych. 1 Cor. xi. 30.

** 1 Cor. viii. 7. 10.

†† ΟΡΑΤΕ. *Videte, Cavete.* Herod. ii. 5. 10. Arist. Plut. v. 215. et passim.

††† ΦΙΛΟΝ ΕΙΗ ΦΙΛΕΙΝ, ΠΟΤΙ Δ' ΕΧΘΡΟΝ ΑΥ' ΕΧΘΡΟΣ ΕΩΝ, Pind. Pyth. 2. v. 15.

Christianity forbids this disposition ; *Beware that none render evil for evil to any man ;* which words are to be understood of *private enmities* and revenges, not of endeavouring to take the benefit of civil government and laws, or seeking to the magistrate for protection from the injuries and abuses of evil-minded and violent men. This seems to be always lawful, and is oftentimes necessary to the preservation of the public peace : but I think christianity intirely forbids all private malice, enmity, and revenge. The instruction of the apostle is here absolute and universal ; *Beware that no man render evil for evil, injury for injury, to any man ;* neither one christian to another, nor any christian to an heathen : But rather

Ever follow that which is good, both amongst yourselves, and to all men. Ever follow : The word is used to signify the most diligent endeavour after and pursuit of any thing. ‘Diligently pursue always that which is good :’ as good is here opposed to evils and injuries, the meaning is, ‘Instead of requiting one injury with another, always endeavour and study to promote the good, the benefit, and advantage of others, both towards each other as christians, and towards all men without exception, whether they be heathens, or even those who have injured and abused you.’ “Do this *always*,” without being weary of such a benevolent and friendly conduct, or suffering your patience to be tired out by any provocations you may meet with.’ It was a wise and remarkable saying of Cleobulus, an ancient philosopher, to this purpose, mentioned by D. Laertius : “Do good to your friend, that he may be more friendly, and to your enemy, that you may make him your friend *.” But farther.

T E X T.

Ver. 16. *Rejoice evermore.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The advice means, ‘Ever maintain a chearful, easy, happy disposition, in every condition and circumstance of life ; not only in peace and plenty, but under affliction and persecution for righteousness sake.’ *Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you,* says Christ : *Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven,* Matt. v. 11, 12. Agreeable to which is that of St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. *Rejoice inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ’s sufferings ; for if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.* So that *rejoicing evermore*, is maintaining an easy, chearful, happy temper, under all events, and whatever be the vicissitudes, we may any of us in the course of God’s providence experience, excited by a becoming attention to our christian privileges, and the greatness of that hope to which we are raised by the gospel promises : *Rejoicing,* says the apostle, *in hope of the glory of God,* Rom. v. 2. And as what is the most certain and effectual method to support this perpetual chearfulness of mind, the apostle adds :

T E X T.

Ver. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The meaning of which advice cannot possibly be, that christians should be perpetually at prayer ; for then there would be no room for other equally necessary and important duties of life ; but, as the apostle expresses it elsewhere, *With all prayer and supplication, praying in every time or season, and watching thereunto with all perseverance,* Eph. vi. 18. So that *praying without ceasing*, is never ‘ceasing to pray in all proper seasons, and upon all suitable occasions, and being ever in a dis-

* Τον φίλον δεῖν ευεργετεῖν ὡς ἢ μάλλον φίλος· τον δὲ ἐχθρὸν, φίλον ποιεῖν. D. Laert. l. 1. § 91.

position ready for this sacred exercise, whenever a convenient opportunity requires it.' To this exhortation the apostle naturally subjoins:

T E X T.

Ver. 18. *In every thing giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That is, 'praising God, and expressing your gratitude towards him for all your mercies; and not only so, but even for your afflictions and persecutions; for these also are benefits, if rightly considered, and may be improved to your very great advantage.' The apostle to the Ephesians gives the same advice, but in stronger terms, *Giving thanks always for all things*, Eph. v. 20. i. e. 'upon all suitable occasions, and in all the various events of life.' And this exhortation the apostle enforces by adding:

For this is the will of God in Christ concerning you. Prayer and thanksgiving are indeed duties of natural religion, which flow from the necessary relation we bear to God, and our continual dependance on him, and the many obligations we are under for life, and all the comforts and enjoyments of life: and it is also the will of God in or by Christ concerning us; he himself hath shewn us the necessity, reasonableness, and advantage of it by his own example, and hath enforced it by his express command: so that what is reasonable and fit in itself, hath the farther obligation of the divine authority and will; and comes enforced to us by the practice and command of Christ.

How do these exhortations reproach the conduct of many who are christians by external profession, who never accustom themselves to these sacred exercises, nor know any thing of the advantages and pleasures that are derived from these evident duties of natural and revealed religion? Asking God's favour and mercy upon us every day, is what one would think the sense of our own wants and dangers, and a regard to our own safety and prosperity should excite us to; and the exercise of gratitude by continual thanksgivings for mercies received, is a thing acknowledged so universally reasonable and becoming from one man to another, that one would naturally hope; no person, no family, should be defective in it towards God; and yet how many are there who live in an habitual neglect of these duties? but instead of reproaching any, let me take notice

Of the nature of this exhortation: *It is to pray without ceasing.* One would think this should mean at least, that we should pray "every day;" and surely every man must be that day defective in duty, who suffers it to pass over him, without once lifting up a serious and humble supplication to God: he must be defective in the care of his own happiness, who doth not endeavour to secure the daily protection and blessing of heaven; he must be a stranger to true religion, who never prays at all, but lives in the continual, habitual neglect of it.

And as the exhortation is, *Pray without ceasing*; so also, *In every thing give thanks.* 'Acknowledge every mercy as the gift of God: own your obligations to him for the grant of it; cherish a grateful spirit, and a thankful heart; and let this disposition be constant and habitual, since there is no circumstance of life void of obligation to God, or that doth not deserve some grateful acknowledgment to be paid him.'

Consider, both *these are the will of God concerning you*; it is his pleasure you should perform them. It is his will, as discoverable by the dictates of natural reason and conscience. Since nothing can be more apparently evident, either than that dependent creatures should habitually acknowledge their dependence on the great author of their lives and mercies, or that prayer for the blessings we want,

and

and thanksgivings for the mercies we receive, are natural and proper expressions of this dependence. So that an habitual neglect of these sacred duties is a plain contempt of the will of God, discovered by the natural reason and judgment of our minds. And what aggravates this fault is,

Lastly, That the living without prayer and praise to God is equally an offence against revealed as against natural religion. For these are both *the will of God by Christ Jesus*. Would our Lord himself have so constantly performed them, had they not been the necessary duties of human nature, and instances of piety acceptable to God? Did he not practise them, that he might engage us to imitate his example? Hath he not commanded them by himself, and by his inspired apostles? and doth not his command carry authority and obligation? Let none, therefore, be found at the last great day to have treated the will of God, and the example and command of his Lord and Saviour, in those instances, with disregard and contempt, but let every day send us to the throne of grace with humble supplications, and hearty praises. And as such sacrifices are in their nature pleasing to God, we may reasonably hope they will derive down to us all those various blessings that are necessary to our present comfort, and to secure our final salvation and happiness.

T E X T.

Verse 19. *Quench not the Spirit.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

By the *Spirit*, in this place is unquestionably meant, those extraordinary gifts which were conferred on many of the primitive christians, and which are frequently called by this name, because they were the immediate effects of the Spirit, influence, and power of God. These gifts were various, and vouchsafed in different kinds and degrees, as God saw proper, and as was necessary to the promoting the success, and establishing the authority and credit of the gospel. Some were instantly inspired with the gift of tongues or languages, so that they could speak without instruction and learning, to persons of different nations, in their own tongues. Others, again, were as instantaneously inspired with an ability to interpret, for the common benefit of the church or congregation, what another had spoken in a foreign language, for the conversion and conviction of unbelievers. Others were enabled to prophesy, i. e. to deliver the great truths of the gospel in an intelligible and clear manner; to explain the Old Testament writings, or to interpret and apply the prophecies of them. Others were inspired with a capacity and ability to pray in public. Others to compose psalms, and hymns, and pious songs, for the more effectually exciting the public devotion. In a word, whatever gift was necessary to carry on the public worship, or to convince unbelievers, or establish christianity, was given to the primitive christians, as God saw convenient, by immediate and extraordinary revelation.

Now these gifts were capable of being improved, and the continuance of them in any good measure depended very much on the right temper and behaviour of those to whom they were vouchsafed. Hence St. Paul to Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee." The word in the original is very elegant and emphatical, as applied by the apostle, signifying 'to re-kindle embers covered with ashes, and so to quicken them with blowing or bellows, as to give them fresh vigour and flame*'; in plain

* Αναζωπυρειν. αναγειραι. Hesych.

allusion to those fiery tongues which descended on the apostles and others, when these sacred gifts were first vouchsafed. Now these extraordinary gifts were to be preserved, and enlivened, and blown up, by meditation and prayer, by a due exercise of them for the public edification, and by cherishing that internal purity of heart, and that freedom from all vicious and criminal passions, which was necessary to the continuance of these divine communications.

And as these extraordinary gifts might be thus preserved and improved, so they might on the other hand be greatly diminished and quite extinguished. This is implied in that before mentioned advice to Timothy; 'Blow up, re-ignite, re-enliven the gift of God which is in thee;' which might be so far decayed, as no more to discover itself than embers covered over and oppressed with ashes. And the exhortation in the place before us, *Quench not the Spirit*, shews it might be entirely lost. The word, we render *Quench*, is also here used with great propriety, and in its natural and original meaning denotes, 'the quenching or extinguishing fire; as in that passage,' Mark iv. 44. *Where the fire is not quenched*; and is here evidently applied by the apostle in allusion to the descent of the Spirit, in cloven tongues of fire. And as fire wholly dissipates and consumes what it feeds, and will itself die away unless supplied with fresh fuel; hence, in its figurative sense, it denotes, 'utterly to waste, extinguish, or destroy any thing*.' And in this meaning it is used by the best classical writers of Greece. Homer speaks of 'extinguishing anger†, and destroying of a man's strength‡.' Plutarch uses it frequently in the like metaphorical sense§. In the ancient epigrams we have the 'extinction of cheerfulness||, and the like expressions. Many other instances might be mentioned**: so that the meaning of the advice, "*Quench not the Spirit*," is, 'Do not suffer any of those sacred gifts, that God by his Spirit and influence hath communicated to you, to languish and decay; do not wholly extinguish and destroy them.' This might be, either by negligence in the use and improvement of them; all moral abilities, endowments, and excellencies, being naturally liable to be impaired and lost by indolence and sloth; whence St. Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 14. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee." Or, by using them for ostentation and pride, and not for the public benefit and edification: hence the apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." Whence is it you are so forward to shew your gifts? "Let all things be done to edifying." Or when they occasioned disorder and confusion by an irregular exercise of them in the public assembly; hence that of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. 40. (which is most ridiculously and impertinently applied in defence of rites and ceremonies,) "let all things be done decently and in order;" for "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." And especially, when those who exercised them indulged any fleshly criminal impurities, or were under the influence of envy, malice, passion, and the like offensive and disordered affections of mind; hence that caution of St. Paul, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemp-

* *Σβῆσαι, παύσαι.* Hesych.

† *Σβῆσαι χολόν.* Hom. Il. i. v. 674.

‡ *Σβῆσαι μένος.* Idem. Il. π. v. 621.

§ *Σβῆσασα καὶ καταπαύσασα μάστιγαν καὶ λυσσαν.* Plut. de Isid. 36. D.

|| *Αυξάμεναν εσβῆσεν ευφροσύνην.* Ep. l. i. c. 2. Ep. 2.

** *Σβῆσαν θυμόν.* Æl. V. H. p. 440.

"tion.

“tion. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;” intimating, that these vices were peculiarly offensive to the holy Spirit, and greatly endangered the loss of his presence and gifts*.

The next advice is somewhat of a like nature with this.

T E X T.

Verse 20. *Despise not prophesyings.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

By prophesyings cannot, I think, be well understood here, prophesyings, or predictions, properly so called; it not being likely those could fall under contempt. The word is used in a greater latitude, for those discourses relating to the prophetic writings, those explications of the ancient prophecies, those sermons in the public congregation upon the doctrines and truths of christianity, which were in some respects indited and delivered by the Spirit of prophecy. On which account the apostle exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. 3. 4. *Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy; for he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort.* And again, *He that prophesieth, edifies the church.* So that these prophecies were evidently the public discourses of pious and holy men, that were delivered, under some assistance and influence of God, to the church, exhorting them to constancy and courage in their christian profession, or designed to support and comfort them under their persecutions and sufferings for Christ, or some way or other intended to promote the great ends of piety and virtue in those to whom they were thus delivered. Now these prophecies the apostle commands them not to despise. The original word signifies, ‘the setting another to nought, a supercilious contempt of him, arising out of pride and haughtiness of mind, and an overvaluing of one’s own excellencies and qualifications.’ Thus the Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others; accounted them of so little worth, as that they entertained the most sovereign contempt of them. Probably, as there was a diversity of gifts in the christian church, some of them were esteemed more excellent and valuable than others; such as the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, and particularly, at Corinth, the gift of tongues, or the power to converse in foreign languages. These were unquestionably very great and surprising endowments, specious and shewy in their nature, and what rendered those who had them, because of the novelty and unusualness of the thing, greater objects of wonder and admiration than others, who had only gifts which might seem to be more natural, and therefore could not so affect and strike the imagination of others. For instance, prophesying, or the speaking to an assembly by way of exhortation and comfort; this might be thought to be nothing more than a common and ordinary thing, the mere effect of nature and study, because speeches to public assemblies were common at all times, and amongst all people. And therefore those who had the more shewy gifts of miracles and tongues seem to have despised and contemned those who only prophesied or preached on useful subjects for the edification of the public assembly; though, as far as one or the other was the effect of immediate inspiration, they were really equally miraculous and wonderful, and though prophesying was a

* Vid. Theophil. in loc.

much more useful and instructive gift in its nature, than either that of languages or miracles: and therefore, to prevent this pride and contempt, the apostle exhorts, "Despise not prophesyings:" "do not look on the gift as a mean and low attainment, nor on those who have it, as persons of mean and worthless abilities; but rather" [as the exhortation signifies, by a figure common to all good writers] "highly esteem and value these prophesyings, as intended of God to promote the common edification of the christian church, and therefore as extremely beneficial and useful in themselves."

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 21. *Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.* This advice, I think also, is to be understood in immediate connection with the foregoing, "Despise not prophesyings." It might be objected, Is every thing that is delivered under the notion of prophesying to be immediately received and embraced? By no means. *Prove all things.* The original word, we render *prove*, is properly used of the trial of metals by fire, to prove whether they are genuine or pure*. Thus it is used in its primitive sense by St. Peter, "your trial is more precious than of gold, though it be tried with fire," 1 Pet. i. 7. Hence it is used in the figurative sense, for the making an exact and critical trial of any thing, and a forming a proper judgment in consequence of such trial†. *Prove all things*, therefore means, "Whatever prophesyings are delivered to you, let them not be immediately received; carefully examine them, and see whether they be agreeable to the evident and unquestionable dictates of the Spirit; prove the doctrines, and the gospel I have taught you; whether they have a tendency to godliness, and to establish and comfort you in your christian faith and profession." It is an advice of the same nature with that of St. John, 1 Epist. iv. 1. "Believe not every spirit," i. e. every pretence to the inspiration of the Spirit; "but try the spirits," δοκιμαζετε, [the same word as in the place before us] "critically examine them, and bring them to the test, whether they be of God;" spirits evidently signifying miraculous gifts or inspirations of the Spirit, whether pretended or real, whether from God, or their own false, lying, and delusive spirits. Agreeable to which is that of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xiv. 32. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" i. e. "every man who prophesieth or preaches in the church, for the common edification and instruction, as under the inspiration of the Spirit, must submit his prophesyings to the examination of other prophets, that it may be seen whether they proceed from the same Spirit of God or not;" because the inspiration of the same Spirit will always be consistent and uniform, and never contradictory to itself; nor were the gifts of it ever intended to be exercised disorderly and irregularly, to the disturbance of the public worship of the church; and therefore the spirits of the prophets are farther subject to the prophets, so far as to regulate the exercise of them, as to time and manner; "because God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." And when you have thus examined them, "hold fast that which is good:" "such prophesyings, as appear upon trial to be useful and good, and therefore to proceed from the Spirit of God, do not despise

* Το μὲν γὰρ χρυσίον ἐν τῷ πυρὶ δοκιμαζόμενον. Isoc. p. B.

† Ælian, V. H. Οὐ δοκιμαζόντες τὰς μινύτας. Non explorabant iudices. Thucyd. p. 379. c. 53. ubi vid. Schol.

‘ them,

them, nor treat them with negligence and contempt, but hold them fast. The word * properly signifies, to hold any thing firmly in one's hands, so as not to let it go; to grasp a spear; to hold the reins; and the like †. In the figurative sense, and as applied to the mind, it denotes, sincerely and firmly to approve, and embrace, and adhere to any thing. "Hold fast that which is good." Such prophesyings as appear to proceed from the Spirit; retain them in your minds, highly esteem them, and constantly and carefully follow their direction.' And finally, the apostle advises,

T E X T.

Verse 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Or, as the words may with equal propriety be rendered, *Abstain from every sort, or kind of evil*; this being the frequent signification of the original word ‡.

If this advice is to be understood in connection with the foregoing, and as I think it reasonably should, the meaning will be, that as when you have examined prophesyings, you should embrace and adhere to all such as are truly useful and good; so on the other hand, you should as carefully reject and keep at a distance from all such as have any appearance of evil in them, or tend to recommend any kind of falsehood or evil whatsoever. As the 'retaining what is good,' in the former paragraph, plainly means, embracing such prophesyings as appear to proceed from the Spirit, and tend to the public edification and order; so the opposition in the present verse, "Abstain from every appearance, or kind of evil," seems as plainly to mean, 'Beware of, and have nothing to do with such kind of prophesyings, as upon a like examination do not appear to proceed from the Spirit of God, or have a tendency to seduce you from the faith and practice of the gospel.' But if any choose to understand the words, as a separate, unconnected, and general rule, the meaning will be, 'Abstain and keep at the farthest distance from every appearance of moral evil, from every thing that borders upon and looks like vice:' or, in the other sense of the word, 'Keep from every kind of sin, from every sort of immorality, as inconsistent with the christian character and obligations.' These senses do in the main coincide, and are each included in the other.

After these excellent admonitions, the apostle subjoins an affectionate prayer for them, as one who knew how much need they had of the assistance of God, and how ready he was to vouchsafe them all that help and influence which their circumstances required.

T E X T.

Verse 23. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly!—
The very God of peace, means, God himself, who is the God of peace, a title frequently ascribed to God in the New Testament, and the sense of it is, God

* Herodian. 2. 1. 3. 5. 6. 7.

† Vid. Theoph. in loc.

‡ Ουδεν παρελειπετο ειδος πολιρκιας. Herod. 3. 9. 8.

Παυτα τε ειδη επιβουλης εξηρτυον. Id. 4. 4. 3.

body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God who is the lover, the author, and the commander of peace; as is plain from that forementioned passage, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *He is not a God of confusion, neither the author nor lover of it, but of peace;* i. e. 'the author and lover of order, peace, and harmony in christian worship, and mutual affection amongst christians.' And as the apostle there gives this character of God, as a motive to the Corinthians to exercise their spiritual gifts in a peaceable, friendly, affectionate manner, so I apprehend he hath a reference to the same thing in the place before us. "Quench not the Spirit;" excite, improve, and exercise his spiritual gifts. "Despise not prophesyings." Neither undervalue the gift, nor treat with contempt the persons of those who have it, because they want others which may appear to you more extraordinary. However, "prove all things;" bring all prophesyings to the test. "Hold fast that which is good;" such as appear worthy the Spirit embrace and adhere to. "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" such as upon trial do not appear consistent with christian truth and holiness, reject, and suffer them to have no influence upon you. "And that you do all these things with that temper and candour, with that peaceable and friendly disposition, with that regard to the peace and good order of the church that is amongst you, that may tend to your prosperity and happiness:" "May God himself, who is the God of peace, who loves, approves, and commands it, sanctify you wholly;" i. e. 'keep you pure and unmixed from the disorders and vices of the world, a peculiar, separate people, devoted to his service and worship.' The word we render *sanctify*, properly signifies to consecrate, separate, and appropriate any thing to religious uses and purposes*. Thus it is frequently used by the Septuagint, for the devoting, consecrating, and appropriating persons and things to the divine service and worship. And this is the general, if not constant use of the word in the New Testament. Thus Christ says, John xvii. 19. "I sanctify myself;" i. e. 'consecrate and devote myself to perform the will of God, and accomplish the designs of his mercy, in dying for the world.' And in like manner our Lord says, John x. 36. "that the Father had sanctified him;" separated and appropriated him to be the Saviour of the world. And thus the apostle prays, "that God would sanctify the Thessalonians, separate them from the corruptions and vices of the world, to be a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works."

He adds, that God would *sanctify them wholly*. The word properly signifies, that which is entire and perfect in the whole, or all its parts; so that the meaning is, that God would preserve them separate from the pollutions of the world entirely, and in the whole of their frame and constitution. And this he furthermore particularly explains by adding, "And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless." There was no need of adding those words, *I pray God*, as our translation hath done. The words might have been rendered as they lie plain in the original, 'May the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and may your entire spirit be preserved blameless.'

These words, *your entire spirit*, may be interpreted three different ways; they may be connected with, and explicative of the words foregoing, "May the God of peace sanctify you wholly, even your entire spirit;" i. e. 'your mind in all its powers, faculties, affections, and passions.' Or they may be rendered as in our

* *ἁγιαζεν. ἁγία ποιεν.* Hesych.

version, so as to be part of the subsequent prayer, "May your whole spirit, "and soul, and body be preserved blameless;" according to which the sense will be the same, though the connection different. But there is a third way, which I prefer before either of the other two, and which I think best answers the construction of the Greek, and that is, by not joining the word we render *whole*, as an adjective to *spirit*; but considering it as a substantive, comprehending the subsequent spirit, soul, and body, as the three distinct constitutive parts of the entire substance or person of a man.

The word we render *whole*, in its original and primitive sense, signifies the whole portion that comes to another by lot or inheritance. Hence it comes to denote more generally any thing that is entire and perfect in its kind*. A perfect city, whose buildings are all standing†; a perfect empire, consisting of all its provinces‡; an entire army, whose troops are undiminished by any accident or calamity§; and a man is said to be thus entire, when he hath all his members of body, and faculties of mind**. And thus in the place before us, the *ὁλοκληρον* is the entire person, consisting of spirit, soul, and body; and should, I think, have been rendered, "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and may your entire person, your whole frame, viz. the spirit, the soul, and the body, be preserved blameless." And this threefold division of man is agreeable to the sentiments of the ancients, who considered him as a being compounded of the mind or spirit††, the principle of rational life; of the *Ψυχη*‡‡, the principle of the sensitive life; and of the body, the mere animal, brutal, or vegetative part. Now all those the apostle prays may be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ; the spirit, by being kept pure from all ignorance, false principles, and bad affections, and adorned with all the sacred dispositions of piety and virtue; the soul, by being purified from all corrupt imaginations, passions, and criminal habits; and the body, by being kept unpolluted with any criminal actions, by the subjection of all its appetites, and being habitually employed in all the good works of a christian obedience. And this, "to the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ," i. e. that we may be found universally and entirely blameless, at the second appearance of Christ, whether we shall live to see it, or whether we shall die before it, and be raised up to meet him in the clouds of heaven. Or, in other words, that we may continue thus blameless to the end of life, and consequently be found so at Christ's appearance.

Having thus expressed his good wishes for them, he adds a very comfortable assurance.

T E X T.

Verse 24. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The sentence in the Greek is evidently imperfect; and therefore some copies have a proper supplement. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will make your hope firm;" i. e. "will confirm and abundantly

* Βασιλεα ευδοκιμησεν εις το ὁλοκληρον. Herod. 6. 9. 15.

† Μεγιστων πολεων ὁλοκληρον. Id. 7. 12. 17.

‡ Αρχην ολοκληρον. Id. 6. 2. 7.

§ Δυναμιν ολοκληρον. Dion. Hal. p. 537. c. 2 fin.

** De Numa. Ολοκληρος, εδεν ὑπο της τυχης κακωθεις. Ibid. p. 130. l. 33. Θυματα ολοκληραι.

I. Pol. Quorum partes non sunt exsectæ, nec vitiatæ. l. 1. c. 29.

†† Νες or πνευμα.

‡‡ Ψυχην attribuerunt etiam brutis. Plut. mor. viz. p. 451. l. 3. Αλογω Ψυχη. Id. Ibid. B.

‘dantly fulfil it.’ But as such defective forms are common in the Geeek language, there needs no such supplement. And the words will naturally bear this rendering: ‘God who hath called you is faithful, who also will do, or act, viz. accordingly, fuitable to this character of a faithful God, by thus preserving you blameless, if you are not wanting to yourselves, and giving you at last that glory to which he hath called you.’

Having thus expressed his prayers for them, he, in return, asks theirs for him.

T E X T.

Verse 25. *Brethren, pray for us.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

He knew the peculiar need he had in his station of the divine presence and assistance, and the weight and efficacy of good men’s prayers with God; and therefore asks the assistance of theirs, that he might be found faithful, and rendered successful in his work.

After this, he adds a friendly salutation to all the Thessalonian converts.

T E X T.

Verse 26. *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

‘Salute them in my name with an holy kiss;’ a kiss being the usual token of great affection and friendship: i. e. ‘Assure them of my sincerest love towards them, and readiness to serve them, as my brethren and friends in Christ.’

Having thus finished his epistle, he orders it in a very solemn manner to be read to the whole church.

T E X T.

Verse 27. *I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

In the Greek it is, ‘I adjure you by the Lord; in the name, and by the authority of the Lord. I lay you under the solemn obligation of an oath, and by your regard to it, enjoin you to read this letter to all the brethren.’ It was wrote for the common benefit, and all had a right to know the contents of it.

He concludes all with the apostolical benediction.

T E X T.

Verse 28. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That is, ‘May his favour continually protect and bless you, and the gifts of his Spirit always enrich you.’ The original word signifies, both favour, and the effects of it; and the apostle, I doubt not, included both, since neither was or could be expected without the other.—And thus have I finished this epistle. And for a conclusion of the whole, *May the God of peace, &c.*

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

A
COMMENTARY AND NOTES
ON
The SECOND EPISTLE of St. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

A
COMMENTARY AND NOTES
ON
THE SECOND EDITION OF THE
TO THE
THESSALONIANS
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

A
COMMENTARY AND NOTES

ON THE

SECOND EPISTLE of St. PAUL to the THESSALONIANS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is remarked, though injudiciously, at the end of this epistle, that it was written from Athens. For as I have observed already, it is certain that his first letter to them was written from Corinth, where the apostle continued for one year and an half: and from the principal subject, of which this second treats, it seems plain that it was wrote not long after the first, and therefore from Corinth as the first was.

In that letter he had expressly told them, that the particular time of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, was an absolute uncertainty; and for that reason had spoken of it as an event, which for any thing he or they knew to the contrary, might happen in his or their time. This some of them seem to have misunderstood, and carried too far; imagining the apostle had asserted that it would certainly be so. Had such an opinion as this prevailed, under the sanction of an apostolic authority, it must have been attended with very bad consequences, and detracted greatly from his credit, and prevented even the success of the gospel itself: and therefore to prevent the farther prevalence of such a persuasion, the apostle writes them this second letter, * which indeed appears to have been the main view and design of it. But as he never forgets to intermix proper exhortations and ad-

* Grotius thinks this was the first. See him on chapter iii. 17.

monitions, and arguments of support and comfort in all his writings; so here he begins with arguments and motives of stedfastness and perseverance, under their persecutions and sufferings for the sake of Christ, as in chapter the first. In the second he comes to the main design of the letter, viz. to prevent their imagining that the day of Christ would certainly come speedily, and during his and their life. And as there were some disorders in the Thessalonian church, he concludes his letter, with suitable directions how to correct and remove them; subjoining, according to his usual affectionate and friendly manner, his apostolical salutation and benediction. This is the substance of the epistle.

The address is the same, word for word, as in the first epistle.

T E X T.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1, 2. *Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That is, as hath been explained: 'I wish you the peculiar and distinguishing favour of God our heavenly Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate, and the friendship, perpetual blessing, and love of both, as your highest consolation and happiness.'

I would only remark here these two things.

1. That this letter was wrote whilst Silvanus and Timotheus were with the apostle at Corinth; as appears from the inscription, in which he joins their names with his own: the reason is because they were both with him when he first preached the gospel at Thessalonica, Acts xvii. 15, 16, and staid some time there, after he was driven from them, by the persecution of the Jews, Acts xviii. 5. and who therefore were well known to them, and probably had been instrumental in converting many of them to the faith of the gospel. And

2. That this epistle is plainly directed to the whole church, both Jews and Gentiles, and that whether the Gentiles were profelytes, or whether they had been idolatrous heathens. And that therefore the enquiry, to whom the epistle relates is quite needless, since it was not directed to any part of the church there, exclusive of the other, but to the whole body of it; the subjects treated of being of general concern, and the directions given of universal importance and necessity.

After this usual introduction, he, with great address, commends and encourages their steady perseverance and fidelity, under their afflictions and persecutions for the sake of Christ and his gospel, by telling them, that he had abundant reason to bless God on this account, and gloried in them, amongst other christian churches that he had gathered.

T E X T.

Ver. 3, 4. *We are bound always to thank God for you, brethren,*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

This is the most insinuating and effectual method of commendation that he could have made use

* *Euxagion tw Oiw, a Phynico rejicitur.*

brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth: so that we our selves glory in you, in the churches of God, for your patience and faith, in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.

use of, which hath all the force that flattery itself could have, and was the properest way in the whole world to establish and strengthen them.

We are bound always to thank God for you, brethren, as it is meet; or, as the sentence might have been rendered, "we have reason, always," viz. 'in all our prayers and thanksgivings, to thank God on your account, brethren, as it is meet, as it is fit we should.' The reason was:

Because your faith grows exceedingly: the literal rendering of the original word is, *abundantly encreases*. Faith here means either their fidelity in their christian profession, as the word frequently means both in sacred and profane writers, or their assent to, and belief of the gospel doctrine and religion. Possibly both senses may be included, and the apostle thanks God on their account, that they grew more and more established in their belief of, and adherence to their principles and profession as christians. And not only so

But the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth. Charity, or as the original word is generally rendered, love is the genuine effect of faith, and includes the sincerest affection and good will, compassion under affliction, pleasure at another's prosperity, and suitable endeavour to promote it.

This charity of the Thessalonians was remarkable, as it was universal in a double sense; they all of them gave abundant proof that they were possessed of this excellent grace and disposition; and they exercised it not only to some particular persons, but to all the members of the church in general. The charity of every one of you all towards one another aboundeth. This was also an excellent commendation of their love, that it was continually abounding; the disposition and proofs of it were perpetually encreasing.

And as this was truly amiable in itself, so it was an example to other churches; therefore the apostle adds, *we ourselves glory in you, in*, or as the particle would have been more clearly rendered, *amongst the churches of God*; those churches which we have planted and gathered in the name and for the worship of the true God. By glorying is sometimes meant a person's rejoicing in his own mind, and exulting upon the account of some circumstance of advantage and pleasure; and sometimes the speaking of it with satisfaction and triumph to others. The apostle might intend both, but principally the latter, because he adds, *amongst the churches of God*. By glorying in them, he means rejoicing and triumphing on their account, speaking of them with pleasure to others, and boasting of them on account of those eminent virtues which they exercised and abounded in.

He mentions particularly, their patience and faith, in all their persecutions and tribulations which they endured. By faith here is unquestionably meant fidelity and constancy. The persecutions raised against the apostle at Thessalonica, did not cease by his removal. The Jews persecuted the converts he made, and did all they could to harass and afflict them: but none of these evils moved * them. Such was their patience and fortitude, and fidelity under them all, that the apostle not only acknowledged it with thankfulness to God, but triumphed

* *Αἱς ἀνεχόμε.* Attice pro ὧν ἀνεχόμε. Sic ὁρῶντες καὶ παροινίας καὶ ἡνιοχούμεν. Her. i. 17. 10. ἡνιοχούμεν. Id. viii. 5. 9.

and boasted of it with the highest satisfaction, amongst all the other churches where he came.

This passage gives us a view of the state of the primitive church: it was a state of great persecution and affliction, in which sufferings were the sure consequence of conversion to christianity.

And as their sufferings were thus remarkable, so also were the graces and virtues they exercised. Their faith encreased abundantly, they grew more and more established in the belief of the gospel; and their charity improved in proportion to their faith: their benevolence was warm, their friendship strong, their brotherly love universal, and the effects of it discovered by all those fruits, that the afflicted circumstances of the church of God called for. Their patience was untired under the severest trials, and their fidelity and constancy not to be shaken by all the malice and rage of their adversaries. Happy times, when the exercise of these virtues was universal, and the several churches of God held up this glorious and amiable light, to the astonishment and conviction of mankind!

How excellent was the temper of this divine apostle! He left others to glory in, and boast of, the poor advantages of birth and fortune, and worldly honours: his triumphs arose from other causes, from the success of the gospel of Christ, from the prevalence of religion and virtue, and from the growing faith and charity, patience and constancy of those he had converted, to the belief of the gospel.

From hence all christians may see, what those virtues are, that form the christian character, and should be inseparable from the christian profession. The foundation of the christian life must be laid in a firm and unshaken faith in God and Christ; this faith must produce an universal fervent charity, manifested in all the genuine fruits of it: patience must be their continual support under the difficulties their profession may expose them to, and their constancy and fidelity must never give way to any attempts that may be made to weaken or subvert them.

Hence we may learn, what the true ground of the rejoicing and triumph of the preachers of the everlasting gospel is: not the ornament of titles, not the number and value of their cures, not their temporal emoluments and preferments; but the success of their labours, the piety and virtue of their converts, the faith, the charity, the patience and exemplary constancy and fidelity of the churches in which they minister. And

Finally, we may here discern that true spirit of benevolence which christianity recommends and inspires, teaching us to look on every thing that is amiable and excellent in others with complacency and delight, and to rejoice and triumph in it as a real benefit and advantage to ourselves, and make it the subject of our sincerest praises and thanksgivings to God.

Having thus expressed the great satisfaction he took in them on these accounts, he proceeds to set before them a very substantial argument to confirm and establish their patience and fidelity for the future.

TEXT.

Ver. 5. *Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted*

COMMENTARY.

In the original * the connection is closer. We glory in you, upon account of your patience and faith in all your persecutions that ye endure, a manifest token

* Εἰς ἐνδοξασιν, as some read it.

counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer. token of the righteous judgment of God, viz. as it immediately follows, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye suffer. Their patience and faithfulness under their sufferings was a manifest token, or, as the original word more properly signifies, an evident illustration of God's righteous judgment, or of God's equitable and impartial distribution of justice. The word we render *judgment*, signifies amongst other things, either the act of judging another, *the process* carried on in his trial, or *the sentence* itself pronounced in consequence of the trial. In both these senses it is used in the New Testament: In the former, in those words of Christ, John v. 22. *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son*; given him the power and dignity of sitting in judgment and trial over mankind: In the latter, in those words, ver. 30. *As I hear I judge*, i. e. 'pass sentence,' and *my judgment*, i. e. 'my sentence is just.' Profane writers * use the word also in the same different senses, either of which will suit the place before us; and the meaning of the apostle is, That their patience and fidelity under their persecutions, should demonstrate and manifest the justice and equity of God in their future trial, and in the sentence that should hereafter be passed on them; which he farther explains by adding:

That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye suffer. The sufferings you endure, you bear upon account of it; animated by the hopes of obtaining it, and because you will not renounce the future inheritance of it: and hereby God will manifest his own righteousness, and demonstrate the equity of his procedure, in your being accounted worthy to be made the possessors of it. For what can be a greater instance of equity in God, than that as they bore their sufferings with constancy, in obedience to him, and for the sake of obtaining this kingdom according to his promise, he should reward their patience and fidelity, and approve himself faithful to his own engagements, by conferring the promised kingdom on them.

It should be observed here, that the worthiness spoken of by the apostle, is not a merit in them equal to so high and substantial a blessing, but a worthiness in the account and estimation of God, and in consequence of his voluntary promise: for the afflictions here endured by christians are but comparatively light, and last but for a moment, 2 Cor. iv. 17. whereas the glory wrought out by them is weighty and substantial, it is durable and eternal, and therefore abundantly, infinitely exceeding all the merit and commendation that can be due to it. And therefore the apostle doth not say, that the righteous judgment of God should be demonstrated by giving them this kingdom, as absolutely due to their worthiness and merit; but in their being accounted and esteemed worthy to inherit it, through his gracious acceptance of them, and in consequence of the voluntary promise of his own mercy and grace. For this is the true original meaning of the word †, viz. to be *esteemed* fit and capable, and worthy by another, and is so used in the writings of other authors, of unquestionable authority.

And this assurance that God would manifest his righteousness in the procedure of the future judgment, the apostle farther illustrates by adding:

* Τίνα κρίσει μεταδίδοναι, est aliquem in judicium dare vel trahere; 'to his trial.' Herod. vii. 1. 20. ἀνευ κρίσεως; *indicta causa*, 'without trial.' Diod. Sic. p. 75. l. 3. κρίσιν ἐμφαυλίζειν τῶν πολλῶν et κρίσιν διαφθεῖραι, est populi judicium, i. e. sententiam spernere et eludere. Ælian. V. H. l. 2. c. 6.

† Τηλικύτων καὶ τοιούτων κατ'ἐξίωμενοι. Qui tot ac talium dignitatis dignus habetur. Dionys. Halic. p. 70. l. 6. v. 2.

T E X T.

Ver. 6, 7. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The apostle argues that God will suitably recompense their constancy under persecution, from the natural justice and equity of the thing itself, that he should deal with all men, according to their characters and actions: this is a general rule of equity, eternal and immutable, from which God will never depart.

Seeing, εἰπερ, i. e. since, or forasmuch as, it is a righteous thing with God, i. e. in his judgment and estimation, and therefore in the original reason and nature of things, or it is becoming the rectitude of his nature, and the equity of his providence and government, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, or more nearly to the original, to recompense affliction to them that afflict you; it being essential to good government, and necessary to maintain the credit and honour of it, to punish the violences of wicked and unjust men: and on the other hand it is equally just in God's account, and worthy his character as the wise ruler of the world, to recompense to you who are afflicted rest with us, with us the apostles and preachers of Christ: being partakers with us of Christ's sufferings, you shall be partakers with us of his glory, and enjoy that eternal rest which remains for all the people of God. The original word we render *rest*, signifies sometimes freedom and exemption from labour and hazard*, particularly the toil and hazard of war†; and sometimes remission and freedom from hard usage and severe treatment‡; and sometimes that free enjoyment and chearful indulgence, which is the effect of liberty§: and as here used by the apostle is extremely significant and expressive; it is a righteous thing with God, it highly becomes his character, to render to you in return for your undeserved afflictions, full and perfect deliverance and exemption from them, and to bring you to a state of perfect rest, where you shall be for ever above the reach of all future molestation and persecution, and enjoy yourselves in circumstances of uninterrupted ease and happiness.

From this passage we may learn, that even the most difficult and unaccountable parts of the divine Providence and government, shall turn out to the future illustration of the divine justice and equity. As there is an eternal and immutable difference between moral good and evil, there is nothing that hath more exercised and perplexed the minds of good men in almost all ages, than that wickedness hath been almost constantly prosperous, and piety and virtue laboured under great difficulties and persecutions: an objection against Providence never to be answered, without taking a future state and judgment into the account. But upon this supposition all is clear: in the best constituted governments on earth, great disorders are frequently committed through the abuse of liberty; and there can be no possible way of preventing them, but by depriving men of liberty, which is the highest injustice and wickedness. But if the laws of civil government are themselves good, and justice and judgment are impartially administered, the disorders of particular persons are no reproach upon government itself, nor any argument of want of care and wisdom in those who have the administration of it. In like manner, the present prosperity of wicked men, and the afflictions of the good, suffer-

* Εν ἀνεσει καὶ ἀναπαύσει τῶν ἔργων. Dion. Hal. v. 2. p. 67. 11.

† Ἀνεσιν. Herod. viii. 5. 20. ἐν ἀνεσει τῆς πόλεως.

‡ Diodor. Sic. l. 5. 313. fin. et. init. 314. Vid. omnino,

§ Diod. Sic. p. 16. c.

ing by their means, is no more than the triumph and insolence of notorious offenders, exercising their cruelty and violence over innocent persons in earthly governments, and rejoicing in their spoils, for a few days, or weeks, till their wickedness is discovered, and they themselves brought to justice. The day of future account will rectify all these disorders, and the justice and equity of God in permitting them, will be rendered the more eminent and illustrious upon account of them.

We are here farther taught that the great illustration of God's equity and justice will be manifested, by the different recompences that shall be allotted to men, suitable to their respective actions in the present life. To those who are afflicted rest from all their sufferings, and a perpetual enjoyment of peace and happiness, and affliction and misery to those that afflict and harass others: all kinds of vice then shall receive their proper wages, but persecutors of truth and righteousness stand marked out for a signal and exemplary vengeance.

It may be farther observed, that the future judgment of God shall proceed on rules of eternal equity and righteousness, and that it really becomes him, it is suitable to, and what may be justly expected from his character, that he should reward and punish men according to the different nature of their actions: it is a righteous thing with God thus to do; and to act contrary to this, to reward vice, or punish virtue, or to make virtue and vice alike miserable, or alike happy, would be to subvert, and act contrary to the rules of justice: so that faith and charity, patience and constancy, true religion and holiness, are the only things capable of being rewarded by God, and all kinds of wickedness and vice, the things that must excite his displeasure, and feel the effects of his indignation. However,

Though the future procedure of God towards mankind be thus directed by rules of justice, so that nothing but true piety or virtue shall or can be rewarded, and no habitual impenitent wickedness shall or can escape unpunished; yet the christian reward of God's everlasting kingdom, is due to us upon no other foundation of justice, but the voluntary engagement and promise of God. It is indeed naturally right and just, that there should be a difference in God's treatment of the good and bad, and consistent with equity that good men's future reward should bear some proportion to the difficulty of their work, and the peculiar severities of their trial; but it is no farther just, that their reward should be eternal, or that it should consist in their inheriting the kingdom of God, any otherwise than by favour and grant, and in order to accomplish the free engagements and assurances of the divine mercy and goodness. It is therefore just on the part of God to make good his own promises of the heavenly kingdom, which promises are the only foundation of our claim to it, but the actual donation of it must be on our part truly unmerited and undeserved.

Finally, how glorious an encouragement is this to perseverance and constancy in true religion, under the greatest disadvantages that can attend the profession of it, that none of the sufferings of this present time are worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed! The kingdom of God includes in it all the honours and privileges that human nature can aspire to: Wherefore let us be steadfast and immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, since we are thus assured, that an abundant entrance shall be administered to us into his everlasting kingdom and glory.

The apostle having thus declared the certainty of God's impartial justice, in his punishing their persecutors, and giving them rest from all their sufferings, proceeds to point out the season when this righteous judgment of God should take place, viz.

T E X T.

Ver. 7. *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The revelation of Christ from heaven, means his second appearance to the world at the general judgment; he being now invisible, and dwelling in the heavenly glory: but when the justice of God shall universally take place, in the distribution of rewards and punishments to all mankind, he shall be *revealed from heaven*, i. e. leave for a season those heavenly mansions, in which he now resides, and publicly appear to the view of the whole world; and that not as a private person, nor in the low circumstances in which he conversed with men, when he first tabernacled in our flesh.

But with his mighty angels, i. e. 'attended with those angels of God, who are described as excelling in strength, and who are unquestionably unspeakably superior to us, as well in power, as in order and dignity.'

But though the angels are justly described as mighty, powerful beings, yet I think the order of the words conveys to us a different meaning, and that the passage should have been rendered, *with the angels of his power*; for this is the literal version of the sentence; with those angels, whom he shall then employ as the ministers of his power, and to accomplish his orders, viz. sounding the trump of God, severing the wicked from the just, and gathering out of his kingdom all things that do offend, as our Lord himself declares, Matt. xiii. 41, 49. and who by executing these commands, shall shew forth his power and glory.

And as the apostle declared that the justice of God was concerned, both to afflict those who unrighteously afflicted others, and to give them rest who were afflicted by them for the sake of Christ, he assures the Thessalonians that this revelation of Christ, by his second appearance, should be to accomplish both these important purposes.

T E X T.

Ver. 8. *In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The words, *in flaming fire*, or *a fiery flame**, may be connected either with the words immediately foregoing or following: *He shall be revealed from heaven in a fiery flame*, denoting the awful majesty of his appearance, and the terrors of vengeance he shall put on in that dreadful day: but as the appearance of Christ is equally for the comfort of the good, as to take vengeance on the bad; I think the expression may be more properly referred to the subsequent words, *To take vengeance in or by flaming fire on them that know not God*; denoting the method of their punishment, and that sudden and irresistible destruction they shall then fall under;

* Εν πυρι φλογος. Some copies read εν φλογι πυρος.

the preposition we render, *in*, being often used to signify, *with*: or to denote the manner or the means, in or by which any thing is done.

The persons on whom this vengeance shall fall, are such as *know not God*; i. e. on those who are willingly ignorant of the true God, and give that worship to the creature which is due to the ever-blessed Creator: Or, who if they know him, yet as the word sometimes signifies, do not *acknowledge* him, nor pay him that habitual reverence, which his perfections and majesty demand and deserve.

Such also who *do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, are expressly marked out as designed for the destruction of this awful day, i. e. who having the gospel preached to them, and the evidence of its truth and divine authority fairly set before them, and the salvation it discovers offered to their acceptance; yet receive it not as a revelation from God, nor govern themselves by the sacred directions of it.

T E X T.

Ver. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Both these shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

The word we render *destruction*, signifies * *the punishment and destruction of death*; and accordingly that everlasting fire, which is reserved for the final punishment of wicked men, is expressly called *the second death*, Rev. xx. 14, 15. a death from which there is no expectation, or possibility of a resurrection; and which destruction or death is therefore strictly and properly eternal: and as this second death implies properly the total and absolute deprivation of that life, to which they were restored by their resurrection, in order to their trial and judgment; so this everlasting destruction is, I think, to be understood, not of an intire extinction of the thinking principle, which the word never implies; but only of an intire extinction of that life, which they received by the resurrection, or by the re-union of soul or body. This destruction, this second death, shall be final and irreversibile.

And this destruction shall proceed, this flaming fire, that shall thus finally and totally destroy them, shall come *from the presence of the Lord*. This I think must be explained from the Old Testament, in which we often read of *the presence of the Lord*, or, as it is in the original, *the face of the Lord*; by which is meant that visible glory, called the *Shekinah*, or habitation of God, which was the manifestation of his immediate presence, and in which the divine power and efficacy did constantly reside; or which was attended with constant visible effects of the power and majesty of God.

This visible glory, face, or presence of the Lord, had a very different aspect and appearance: to good men though awful, yet was it not destructive; they saw it, they adored, and they delighted in it: it was their guide, and the sure evidence of the favour and protection of God. Thus God to Moses, *My presence shall go with thee*, Exod. xxxiii. 14. And Moses, with a generous concern for his people's safety and honour: *If thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence*, ver. 15. *If thy presence*, the pillar and the fire that conducted us out of Egypt; if that go not with us, *carry us not hence*. The Psalmist also, *Cast me not away from thy presence*, Ps. li. 11. *Come before his presence with singing*, Ps. c. 2. These and many other of the like expressions refer to that glory that was frequently visible in the tabernacle or temple.

* διην τιθενσι. Sic. Diod. Sic. l. 16. τας προσηκουσας δικας εξιστιν.

At other times this glory appeared in a much more awful and dreadful manner, to the unspeakable terror of those who beheld it. Thus our first parents, after their fall, were afraid, and *hid themselves from the presence of the Lord*, Gen. iii. 8. *The heavens dropped, and Sinai moved at the presence of God*, Ps. lxxviii. 8. Sometimes a destructive fire issued forth from it, and entirely consumed such as were near it; to which the Psalmist frequently alludes in those expressions, when he speaks of men's *falling or perishing at the presence of God*; and instances of which we have in Nadab and Abihu, concerning whom it is said, *There went out fire from the Lord*, Lev. x. 2. or, as it is in the original, *from before the face or presence of the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord*, or in his presence. In allusion to these and the like passages, the apostle tells us, they *shall be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*, from that symbol of God's presence that resides in Christ, and which the apostle immediately explains, by adding, *and from the glory of his power*, i. e. 'from that awful and powerful glory, that shall then encompass him, and demonstrate that God his heavenly Father is with him, and acts in and by him.' This seems to be intimated in that passage, where the kings of the earth, and the great men, are represented as hiding themselves in dens, and the rocks of the mountains, *and saying to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*, i. e. 'from that majestic and insupportable glory, that shall encompass the Lamb when seated on the throne, as the great vice-gerent and representative of his invisible and almighty Father. For Christ is the true Shechinah, or habitation of his Father's glory, and in whom all the fulness of God dwells substantially, and visibly.

And what shall aggravate the terrors of this vengeance is, that it shall be dealt out,

T E X T.

Ver. 10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The enemies of God and true religion, the persecuting Gentiles, *who know not God*, the persecuting Jews, *who believe not the gospel*, shall see themselves separated and marked out for destruction; whilst the very persons they hated, and persecuted from city to city, shall then, to their unspeakable grief and confusion, appear to be *the saints*, the holy ones, the chosen and elect of God, and separated to final happiness and glory, the character in which the Jews especially boasted: and their very faith in Christ, on which account both Jews and Gentiles hated them, shall then appear to be the true reason of their being acknowledged as the saints of God, and exempted from their destructive vengeance, for *he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe.*

These words are capable of a double interpretation; either that Christ shall be glorified and admired by his believing saints, upon account of the vengeance he shall then take on his and their enemies, and the salvation and rest he shall then give them as the reward of their faith and patience; or else, he shall be glorified and admired in them, i. e. upon account of them, and by their means: his advancing them to the heavenly glory, and thus accomplishing the eternal purposes of his Father in their compleat salvation, and giving them the most convincing evidences of his affection and fidelity to them, and care of them, together with the vengeance he shall take on all ungodly men, shall cause him to be glorified, i. e. to appear

appear truly glorious, and secure him the just acknowledgments, honours, and praises from heaven and earth; in which sense of being esteemed, and celebrated, the original word we render, *glorified*, is frequently used*: the other expression of being *admired in them that believe*, is much of the same signification. The word implies much more than to be merely admired, which is its primitive meaning; even that inward veneration, that high esteem, that full approbation, that often causes wonder and astonishment, and is so used by the best writers†. And unquestionably the transactions of this important day, are of such a nature, and shall be carried on with that perfect impartiality, and concluded with such substantial proofs of equity, as shall cause all the spectators of that solemn transaction, to behold him with wonder, with the highest veneration of soul, and to offer him tributes of praise and glory, suitable to that wisdom, equity and goodness, which shall then display themselves in his whole procedure.

The apostle concludes this account by adding,

T E X T.

Because our testimony amongst you was believed in that day.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

These words are variously understood and interpreted by different persons: the generality, I think, with our translators, suppose the words, *because our testimony amongst you was believed*, to be a parenthesis; and the last words, *in that day*, to belong to the preceding part of the discourse: as thus, *When he shall come to be admired in all them that believe in that day; because our testimony amongst you was believed*, i. e. Christ shall punish the wicked with an everlasting destruction when he shall come, in that day of the wicked's destruction, to be glorified in his saints, and particularly in you, because our testimony amongst you was believed, or because you believed the testimony concerning Christ, which we gave you: but I think this interpretation appears extremely forced, and needs too many supplements to make up the sense, to pass for the right one. And the words, *in that day*, seem to be quite needless in this view of the sentence; for then the words will run, *in that day when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe in that day*; which is evidently an unnecessary repetition, without emphasis or grace. I might also add, that as the apostle speaks of Christ's being *glorified in his saints* in general, and amongst *all them that believe*, the reason he urges, *because our testimony amongst you was believed*, doth not seem to have much force or strength in it: for what connection is there, that because the Thessalonians in particular believed the apostle's testimony concerning Christ, that therefore he should hereafter be admired in all that believe. This doth not seem at all agreeable to St. Paul's usual method of writing and reasoning.

The interpretation given by Grotius, seems much more easy and natural, and is, I think, the true one, viz. Christ shall be then admired in all them that believe, *because in that day our testimony to you shall be believed*; that very account we now give you, concerning the coming of the Lord, the destruction of your persecutors, and your enjoying perpetual rest, shall be abundantly verified and accomplished, even to the full, the dreadful conviction of those, who now reject or despise it. Infidelity shall then come to a final end, and the unreasonableness of it appear by

* Δεδοξασμένων ιατρών. *Approbatorum, illustrium Medicorum.* Diod. Sic. p. 74. l. 5. Εν παιδεία δοξαζέοντες. *Doctrinæ nomine celebrati.* Id. p. 62. l. 3. a fine.

† Herodian. sæpe. Ælian. V. H. sæpe. Diod. Sic. p. 62. B. where he hath both the words which the apostle here uses, in the same sense. Πολλα των ηθων—ε μετριως εθαυμαδι· διοτι οι μεγαλαιοι των εν παιδεία δοξαζέντων.

the most awful demonstrations. Nor is this sense of the original word unusual, viz. to denote that confirmation or credit which any thing gains, by its fulfilment or coming to pass*. The whole sentence may and should be rendered thus, *He shall be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony to you, i. e. which we now give you, is to have full confirmation and credit in that day.*

* Having thus comforted them with this glorious assurance, he concludes this part of his letter with a very friendly and affectionate prayer for them.

T E X T.

Verſes 11, 12. *Wherefore alſo we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Wherefore, ſince there is ſuch a day of glorious retri- bution, we pray always for you, make it the ſubject of our conſtant addreſſes to heaven in your behalf, that our God, that God in whom you and we equally believe, would count you worthy of this calling, i. e. ' finally ' confer and beſtow on you this happineſs to which ' you are called, as perſons in his eſteem and judg- ' ment fit to obtain it; ' which is the frequent ſenſe of the original word, even when the thing conferred upon another is a real favour. The word † indeed implies a real or ſuppoſed fitneſs for any thing, and the conſequent grant and beſtowal of it. Their be- ing ſaints and believers was the Theſſalonians meet- neſs for this calling; in conſequence of which he prays, that God would actually make them partakers of it. He farther adds, according to our rendering:

That God would fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs; i. e. as this verſion is ex- plained, ' That God would, according to his great benevolence, accompliſh and ' perfect all the kind and good purpoſes of his grace towards you, in your grow- ' ing and entire ſanctification; and particularly the work of faith with power, i. e. ' by his powerful influences upon your minds, confirm and eſtabliſh you in your ' chriſtian faith and profeſſion, as the ſure proof of his goodneſs towards you.'

But though the ſenſe conveyed by this rendering is very good, and ſuch as I have no exception againſt, yet I confeſs it doth not appear to be the ſenſe of the place. For in the firſt place, the word *his*, i. e. God's, *goodneſs*, is not in the original, but ſupplied by our translators: And in the next place, though the word we render, *his goodneſs*, be ſeveral times uſed in the New Teſtament, yet it is never elſewhere applied to God, but always to men, and ſignifies the moral virtue of be- neficence, or goodneſs of diſpoſition, appearing in all the genuine effects of kind- neſs and bounty; and therefore I think ſhould be ſo underſtood in the place be- fore us. And the whole paſſage may be thus literally rendered: *That God would*

* Vid. Elſner. A very expreſs paſſage to this purpoſe in Herodian. 2. 10. 4. *Απερ παντα αψευδη και αληθη τοτε πιſευεται, οταν εις την αποβαſιν ευτυχηθι.* *Quæ omnia fidem veri impe- trabunt, quum ſunt eventum ſortita.* Sic. Demoſt. cont. Androt. p. 699. *Ει τα καταχευαſθεντα επιſτευθι.* *Si quæ ab illo machinata ſunt fidem invenient.*

† *Αριſτειων ηξιωθησαν.* *Premii virtutis digni habiti ſunt, imo honorati.* *Æl. V. H. l. 12. c. 10.* *Τιμωμενοſ δε και των μεγαλων αξιωμενοſ.* *Lyf. Orat. p. 216.*

fulfil * every kind intention of generosity or goodness in them. That God would fulfil, i. e. 'God would accomplish and perform by you, every kind intention, desire, inclination, or purpose of goodness;' in which sense the word is several times used in the New Testament. Thus St. Paul, Rom. x. 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire is that Israel may be saved.* And again, Phil. i. 15. *Some preach the gospel with a good will,* i. e. intention or purpose; and in other places that might be mentioned. And this exposition exactly agrees with the circumstances and character of the Thessalonians, concerning whom the apostle himself bears witness, 2 Cor. viii. 2. 3. that they were *rich in liberality*, and even *beyond their power willing to do good*; they had many kind and benevolent purposes of charity that even exceeded their ability. In such a view of their circumstances, how pertinent was this prayer of the apostle, that God would fulfil every purpose of goodness, or in the course of his providence cause all their kind and benevolent intentions to take effect! To which he subjoins also:

That God would fulfil *the work of faith with power*. The words *with power* should be joined with the verb *fulfil*, and denotes that efficacious influence and concurrence of God which the apostle prays for, in order to bring all their kind intentions to pass, and to fulfil *the work of faith*; i. e. 'that their faith might produce its proper effects, and discover itself by the fruits of an exemplary obedience. *The work of faith* is no Hebraism, but proper Greek, and justified by similar expressions in approved writers; such as, *works of wisdom*, and *works of fortitude*, and *works of reason* †; expressions which imply the natural and genuine effects of wisdom, fortitude, and reason. So here, *the work of faith*, is that which is the effect and production of faith; that constancy and firmness in the christian profession and life, which a steady faith in God and Christ will certainly produce. So that the meaning of the whole prayer is this: That God by his gracious power would enable them to accomplish every kind benevolent purpose they had formed in their hearts, and so establish them in those principles of truth they had embraced as christians, that they might adorn their christian character by an universal, exemplary, and steady obedience. The words may indeed bear another sense, and be rendered, "even the work of faith with power." That God would accomplish every kind purpose of benevolence, even the work of faith, i. e. 'charity, because *faith worketh by love.*' Adding,

That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you; viz. that when their enemies, both Jews and Gentiles, saw their exemplary charity, their fortitude and patience under sufferings, and all the virtues of a good life, to which their principles influenced them, they might have an high veneration for him by whose name they were called, and if possible be prevailed on to embrace his religion which they professed: and *that you may be glorified in him*, appear truly honourable before God and man, in being counted worthy to suffer for his name, and continuing stedfast and immovable in your christian piety and virtue, *according to the grace*, or favour of our God, who hath called you forth to be glorious examples of fortitude, piety, and virtue, to a degenerate and wicked world; and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who approves your fidelity, and at his coming will surely recompense it with everlasting rest, and an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—We are in this passage taught,

* *Επληρῶ υποσχέσεις. Implebat fidem. Herod. 2. 7. 9. Πληρῶσαι ἐντολὰς. Exequi mandata. Id. 3. 11. 9.*

† *Εργα σοφίας, ἐργα ἀνδρίας. Plut. de Isid. p. 361. D.*

1. The certainty of Christ's second appearance. "The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven. He shall come to be glorified in his saints," verses 7, 10.

2. The glorious manner of his coming is here set before us. It shall be with the angels of his power, and encompassed with the glory and majesty of his eternal Father, verses 7, 8.

3. That the angels shall at this day be the ministers of Christ's power, and employed by him in executing the resolutions of his impartial equity and justice; and that therefore Christ is not properly an angel, but one greater and more excellent than they, verse 7.

4. That neither the saints of God shall enter into their complete rest, nor the destruction of the wicked fully take place, till this second glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, verses 7, 8.

5. That one great end of this his appearance shall be, to execute the vengeance of God upon all the enemies of truth and righteousness, verse 8.

6. That wilful ignorance of God, and disobedience to the gospel revelation, will certainly expose men to the vengeance of this tremendous day, verse 8.

7. That the punishment of such persons shall be properly destruction or death, i. e. a certain forfeiture of that immortal life to which all sincere christians shall be raised; and that this destruction shall be everlasting. The second death shall have an absolute, irreversible dominion over them. But that as the first death by no means implies an utter extinction of the soul, so neither is such an extinction of the soul implied in, or can be inferred from this second destruction or death, verse 9.

8. That this entire destruction shall proceed from that flaming fire, or consuming glory, which shall then encompass the Son of God, and dwell in him, as the awful evidence that God himself is present with him, and acts by him, verse 9.

9. That the characters which shall then stand distinguished, and save men from the consuming fire, which shall then flame out destructive vengeance, shall be those of saints and believers. Such who are holy in all manner of conversation and godliness, and who firmly credit and obey the everlasting gospel, verse 10.

10. That the salvation he shall then confer on all his saints, and his impartial equity in the universal distribution of justice, shall make the Lord Jesus Christ appear truly glorious, create in all that shall behold him the highest admiration, reverence, and esteem, and secure him the just tribute of adoration and praise, verse 10.

11. That the transactions of this awful season shall put an end to all infidelity, and give an everlasting conviction of the truth of the gospel testimony, to the unspeakable terror and misery of all unbelievers, and the eternal consolation of all who have received and embraced it, verse 10.

12. That as God hath called us to the hope of this blessed season, it ought to be our constant endeavour and ambition, that God may account us worthy of that everlasting rest and glory which shall then be revealed, verse 11.

13. That in order to our being thus accounted worthy by the favourable sentence of God, we ought to cherish the most generous purposes of benevolence and goodness, do all we can to accomplish and fulfil them, and to cherish that strong and lively faith, that shall produce all its genuine effects, even the works and fruits of a constant and unblameable obedience, verse 11.

14. That it ought to be the subject of our constant prayer for ourselves, and what

what all the faithful ministers of Christ should daily pray for in behalf of their respective churches; that God would count them worthy of his heavenly calling, enable them to accomplish every kind intention of benevolence, and help them by his powerful influences to abound in all the fruits, and increase in all the good works of a lively, active faith, verse 11.

15. That it ought to be our ambition and great study as christians, that the name of Christ may be honoured, and his interest and religion may flourish in the world, by our exemplary behaviour, and particularly by the exercise of patience, by a diffusive benevolence and goodness, and by a steady and active faith, ver. 12. And finally,

16. That if Christ be thus glorified in and by us, such is the mercy of God, such the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we shall be glorified in him; receive all those supplies of grace that our circumstances may peculiarly need in the present world, in order to maintain the dignity and honour of our christian character; and obtain the recompence of eternal life and glory from him, when he shall come to take vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; and to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

In the former chapter, the apostle declares and explains the great and important doctrine of God's rendering to all men according to their works; of his taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; and of being glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, in the great day of Christ's appearance: and thus introduces what appears to have been the main design of this epistle, viz. to caution the Thessalonians against expecting the sudden or near approach of this awful season.

C H A P. II.

T E X T.

Verfes 1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

In the foregoing epistle, the apostle had declared, that at Christ's appearance with the voice of the archangel, those who shall be then alive, and all the saints that shall be raised from the dead, shall be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord; and therefore he begins this chapter with a plain reference to these words, which seem to have been misunderstood, as though the apostle had fully asserted, that themselves should be alive at this coming of Christ. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him."

The word we render, *by*, "We beseech you by the coming of Christ," is, I believe, never used in this sense; nor doth the apostle seem to intend a solemn adjuration, as this translation evidently conveys. As though the apostle meant, "I beseech and adjure you by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." Because the verb we render, *Beseech*, is never used in this strong sense of requesting and adjuring. The original and usual meaning of it, is to ask a question, and it is so seldom used at all for requesting a favour, or beseeching any thing of another, that some

some critics * think the apostle affixes the sense of a Latin word to it, and others that of an Hebrew one; though I think they are equally mistaken in their observations.

The words should have been rendered: "We beseech you, brethren, in relation to, or concerning the coming of Christ, and our gathering together to him." And though the construction in the Greek is natural enough, yet the English version would have been more plain, had the whole rendering ran thus, "We beseech you, brethren, that ye be not shaken in mind, or troubled, concerning this coming of Christ, and our gathering together by him, neither by spirit, word, or letter as from us, as though the day of Christ was at hand."

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the apostle speaks of, is evidently that when he shall raise the dead, spoken of in the former epistle, and when he shall take vengeance on the wicked, and be glorified in his saints, spoken of in the former chapter of this. And by our gathering together unto him, he means, our being carried in clouds to meet him after the resurrection, when all his followers shall meet together, and be for ever with the Lord.

Now concerning this coming of Christ, and our being gathered together to meet him in the air, the apostle exhorts them, "Be not soon shaken in mind." The word which we render, *shaken*, is originally and properly used of ships that are tossed and shaken by the waves of the sea †. Hence it is, by an elegant figure, applied to the agitation and distress of the mind, when it labours under any uneasy apprehensions and fears; and the words should have been rendered, "Be not shaken from your mind;" i. e. either be not so distressed and agitated by your apprehensions and fears of the speedy coming of this day, as to lose the quiet possession of your minds and judgments: or, do not suffer yourselves to be moved from the true sense of my words in my former letter. For the word we render *mind*, signifies also the sense and meaning of any thing. Be not thus disquieted, or soon and easily moved from your persuasion and judgment, like ships distressed by the tossings of the sea, which cannot keep on their direct course, through the violence of it.

"Nor be ye troubled." This word is of a peculiar signification, and is explained by the ancient grammarian Hesychius ‡, by speaking, founding, and being struck with fear and terror; and its true meaning is compounded of all these, viz. to signify the surprize and trouble that any one receives by an unexpected rumour or report of any disagreeable news. Thus it is used with great propriety, both by Matthew, chap. xxiv. ver. 6. and Mark, chap. xiii. ver. 7. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled;" viz. at these reports. And this exactly suits the place before us, "Be ye not shaken from your mind and judgment, nor troubled at the report that the day of the Lord is at hand, whether it be said to come from a spirit, or word, or letter as from us."

"Not by spirit," i. e. "Whether this report is said to come from any one possessed of a prophetic spirit. Give no heed to it; be not uneasy about it; do not alter your judgment from what you were taught by me, when I was present

* Grot. in Philip. 4. 3. et notis majoribus ad hunc locum.

† Herod. Dionys. Hal. *de mundo fluctuante in vacua immensitate*, utitur voce. Plutarch. Orac. Del. p. 433. D. καὶ ἐν ἀπειρῷ κενῷ τὸν κόσμον σαλευεῖν.

‡ ὁρῶν. λαλεῖ, ἡχεῖ, ἐκπλετίζεται. Hesych.

‘with you, though the report is said to come from one that hath really a spirit of prophecy, or pretends to it.’ In this sense the word *spirit* is frequently used in the New Testament: 1 John iv. 1. 6. “Try the spirits, whether they are of God.—Believe not every spirit.—Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error;” i. e. ‘whether a person speaks under the inspiration of the true spirit of God, or a false and deceiving spirit.’ And what is not, I think, taken notice of, it is frequently used even by Plutarch *, an heathen writer, in the same sense, who in several places speaks of the prophetic spirit, and of the power, and efficacy, and wonderful influence of it. Again,

As they were not to be troubled at the report of the instantaneous coming of the day of Christ, though pretended to proceed from a prophetic spirit, so neither were they to be moved at it, though declared to come from any thing that the apostle himself had said. “Nor by spirit, nor by word as from us;” i. e. ‘though I am said to be the author of this report, or to have any where delivered it as a certain truth.’ The apostle appeals to them, at verse 5th, “Remember ye not that when I was yet with you. I told you these things;” i. e. ‘that several important events must come to pass, before the approach of this day of Christ; and therefore believe none that tell you, that I have delivered or preached any where a contrary doctrine;’ it being highly probable that many deceivers endeavoured to gain authority to their own falsehoods, by pretending that they received their instructions from some apostle, that thereby they might draw over disciples to themselves, and thus adulterate and corrupt the truths of Christ.

And finally, he cautions them against being troubled at such a report, though it should be said to be founded on any one of his own letters. “Neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle as from us;” hereby assuring them that there was nothing to countenance such an opinion in his first letter; and that if any one pretended a letter from the apostle asserting it, it was for that reason counterfeit and spurious, since he had never asserted that this day was at hand, or now instantly coming, as the original word signifies. And having thus guarded them against hastily concluding upon such an immediate approach of the day of Christ, he proceeds to lay down some important events that must necessarily precede it. Particularly,

T E X T.

Verse 3, 4. *Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth*
in

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Let no man deceive you by any means. Do not suffer yourselves to be imposed on in this affair by any pretences whatsoever; for it cannot be *unless first there come a falling away*; or literally, an apostacy. The word, amongst other significations, denotes † an hostile separation or secession of one part of a nation from another, or a defection from, or rebellion against the sovereign, or prince, or power we are in subjection to; or a mutinous revolt of soldiers against their commander and general ‡. And in the place

* De Defect. Orac.

† Dion. Hal. p. 437. 40. 47.

‡ Herod. Diod. Sic. l. 16. p. 441. a. 442. d. Thucyd.

in the temple of God, shewing that he himself is God.

place before us it apparently means an apostacy, defection, or revolt, and that evidently from God. For the person that was to be the head of it, is described as opposing and setting himself up above all that is called God, shewing himself that he is God. And that we might know what kind of apostacy from, and opposition to God, is here intended, the apostle describes the introduction of it as managed, not by force and violence of arms, but by fraud, deceit, and imposture. His coming was to be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. From which accounts it is evident, that the apostacy described is an apostacy from truth and righteousness, even from the faith and morals of the gospel, which is by way of eminency stiled the truth; and that it was to be introduced and managed by a single person at the head of it, and that it was to be conducted under him by diabolical sleights, and lying wonders and miracles.

This person is described under very significant and strong characters: *the man of sin*, except there come first an apostacy, and the man of sin *be revealed*; intimating, that when the apostle wrote, he lay covered and concealed, and had not yet discovered himself to the world, and that the apostacy, and the revelation of the man of sin were to be contemporary events, or to take place pretty near together. He is called the man of sin to denote one eminently impious and wicked; or as one of the Greek commentators on the place explains it; one who was to commit all sort of wickedness himself, and to deceive others into sin.

And as he was to shew himself thus supremely wicked, so the apostle farther calls him, *the son of perdition*; one destined to certain and absolute destruction. He was to rise gradually, as impostors generally do, and to deceive great multitudes by false pretences to miracles, and to rise to the utmost height of impiety, so as to assume the very worship of God himself. But was doomed to perdition, and finally to be destroyed.

He is farther described as one *who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God*; an expression extreamly and peculiarly remarkable. *He opposeth himself*. The Greek is emphatical, *the opposer*, or, *the adversary*, to denote one peculiarly and eminently an adversary to God, and truth, and righteousness; one who deserves that appellation in a distinguishing and appropriating manner, who, as Grotius rightly observes sets himself in opposition to God with an habitual, constant, and determined purpose; the word properly denotes * one who sets himself in a state of intire and absolute opposition to God and righteousness, and is as directly contrary to both, as any one country whatsoever can be opposite or contrary to another.

And this opposition he was to make appear, by exalting himself above every one who is called God. The expression is indefinite, and denotes the height of pride and impiety. God himself is called by this sacred name, because he truly and immutably is what this awful name implies. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as mediator, is called God, because the divine fulness of power and wisdom, and grace, resides in him. Angels are called gods, because of their dignity, strength, and employments. Magistrates are called gods, because in power and authority they

* Herod.

† Diod. Sic.

bear some shadow or resemblance of God. Now this man of sin is described as exalting himself above every one who is called God; or insolently lifting himself up above them; either by assuming greater honours, or pretending to higher authority and power, or taking upon him to over-rule and abolish the laws and ordinances of all who are called gods; or, in other words, to behave and act as though all powers, divine and human, lodged and centered in him.

The apostle adds, above every thing that is called God, *or that is worshipped*. The word signifies two things: either the object of worship, or the worship itself that is paid the object*. In the latter, it means all the ceremonies of religion that were made use of in the sacred solemnities of worship. In the former sense, it is frequently used by the Apocryphal writers to denote the idols of the Gentiles†. If the word be used in this latter sense, it will only be explicative of the former, he exalteth himself above every one that is called God, or held as an object of adoration and worship: and therefore, I think, it may be much better understood in the former sense, viz. of the divine worship and adoration to such objects, as are judged worthy to receive it, whether the true God or others. And thus the character will be that of the most finished insolence and impiety that can be; one that proudly and presumptuously raises himself up above every one that is called God, and above all kinds and institutions of religious worship whatsoever, by taking upon him to alter and set aside all the appointments of religion and worship, ordered by God or man.

Infomuch as the apostle adds, *that he, as God sitteth in the temple of God*. By the temple of God is here unquestionably meant, the church of God and Christ, which is frequently represented under this character in the New Testament, in allusion to the ancient temple of the Jews; because that presence of God, with which that temple was once honoured, dwelt and resided in true christians, by principles of eternal truth, by the habits of true godliness, and by the comforts and extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit. And thus Theophilact on the place explains it: ‘not (says he) particularly in the temple of Jerusalem, but plainly in the churches, and every divine temple.’ And Theodoret: ‘he calls (says he) the churches the temple of God, in which he shall seize the primacy, endeavouring to shew himself God.’ So that here is another strong mark and character, by which this son of perdition may be known. He was to seat himself, to have his peculiar residence in or at the temple or church of God. The apostacy therefore he was to head or conduct, was an apostacy in and from the church of Christ. Here he was to exercise his power; here he was to exalt himself above every one that was called God, and above all the appointments, institutions, and rites of worship, prescribed in or used by the church. If any one sought after this man of sin, they might find him by his residence. It was in the temple of God, or church of Christ.

I would only add, that the original words we render, *he sitteth*, are much more emphatical in the original, and should have been translated, he seateth, or placeth himself in the temple of God; to denote his insolent and violent intrusion of himself into God’s temple and church; and that he doth not sit there by any real right or legal authority, derived from God or man. And this construction of the word is justified by other writers. *Ælian. V. H. l. c. 22.*

* Dionys. Halicar. p. 24. l. 6. & 267. l. 3.

† Sapient. 14. 20. & 15. 15.

Here he was to *shew himself, that he was God*. I think the words should be rendered, that he is a God; the emphatical article, that would confine the term to the one true God, being wanting. So that the meaning is, he should set himself to be a God; either blasphemously assume the name of God, or arrogate to himself those adorations, rights, powers, privileges, authority, submission and obedience, which can be due only to God, and which were really destructive of, and inconsistent with the authority and power of God himself. I would only add, that the word we render, *shew*, shewing himself that he is God, hath a much stronger signification, and denotes an authoritative setting himself up, declaring himself to be, and appearing in public view and character, as a God, as I could prove by many unquestionable authorities*. So that the proper meaning of the expression is, and the translation should have been, publicly declaring himself, that he is a God; denoting that contrary to all law and reason and truth, he proudly creates himself into a God, and impiously assumes divine powers and privileges.

Having given this account of the extraordinary apostacy that was to take place in the christian church, and of the person by whose ambition and pride, and craft and violence it was to be managed and conducted; the apostle appeals to the Thessalonians, that this was no new doctrine, but what he had assured them of before, even when he was personally present with them.

T E X T.

Ver. 5. *Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

I assured you that they must come to pass, before the coming of the day of Christ. So that this mistake of imagining that Christ's second appearance was instantly to take place, could not be collected from what St. Paul had himself delivered; since he had assured them that this apostacy in the christian church was first to take place, and the man of sin to raise himself up to his impious power, by his imposing on and deceiving all the corrupt part of the christian world.

The truth seems to be, that during the apostle's absence from them, some weak or designing persons had been amongst them, and had spread this opinion amongst them to their great terror; grounding it either upon his former epistle, or declaring they heard him assert it in some conversation or other, in which they had been present with him; and probably endeavouring to confirm it, by pretending also that they themselves had it by revelation from the Spirit of God. This accounts for those expressions, that they should not be troubled neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as though the day of Christ was at hand.

I shall not on this occasion enquire particularly to whom this prophecy peculiarly belongs, and in whom every circumstance of it is verified. I shall only observe, that almost all the great and remarkable apostacies from, and corruptions of the doctrine of the christian church, have been owing to the ambition and pride of men, who have wanted to exalt themselves above others in the temple of God. Where men are governed by ambition and the lust of dominion and power, they will scruple no methods to promote it; but will trample upon

* Dionys. Hal. p. 602. l. 22. 621. 13. 590. l. 7. Diod. Sic. p. 93. A. Herod. saepe.

all laws, both human and divine, that stand in their way, and corrupt and adulterate truth itself to render it serviceable to the ends they aim at. Nor are there any titles whatsoever, though blasphemous, arrogant, and presumptuous, that they will not claim and take, if they can find men fools or profligate enough, to confer them on them. Gods and lords, they will not refuse the compliment of, nor any other extravagant characters or powers, that may be ascribed to them. But as the assuming such titles is directly contrary to the humility and meekness of the christian religion, so it is a sure sign of an undue elevation and height of spirit. Let us rather follow the meekness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and learn of him who is humble in spirit; adorning the doctrine of the gospel, by patience, forbearance, and all other virtues of the christian life. Let ministers rejoice in these as the most honourable titles, the ministers of God and Christ for their people's sake; and let his people glory in this; that they are his disciples, wear his name, are heirs with him of his glory, and shall hereafter be partakers of his kingdom.

The apostle having in the foregoing part of the chapter, given the proper character of the person under whom the great apostacy in the christian church was to take place, and put them in mind of the information he had given them whilst he was present with them; recalls to their remembrance another circumstance, which he then told them of, but which prudence did not permit him to mention publicly, in a letter, that was intended for the common use of the christian church in Thessalonica, and which could not be spread abroad without giving offence to the Roman government, and exposing the christians themselves to the resentment and anger of it.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 6. *And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.*

Or, as the words in the original run: *and ye know what now withholdeth.*

The word signifies, to *keep in*, to restrain, or prevent a person's doing any thing. To keep in a man's own self, or to restrain a person's inclinations and vices; to keep another in, or hinder his doing any thing, are senses of the word to be found in the best writers*. And though the apostle here speaks indefinitely, ye know *what* now restrains or keeps him in, yet that he speaks of a person is evident from the next verse, where we have the same word expressly used of a person, though differently rendered by our version, *only he who now letteth will let*, i. e. 'he who now restrains, or prevents his appearance.'

And I think one cannot be at a loss, either from the nature of the subject, or the manner of the expression, to know, what and who, the apostle intends. The character of this man of sin is, that he should set himself in opposition to, and actually exalt himself above every one *that is called God*; and therefore above the majesty of the Roman emperor himself. But this prediction, this insolent oppo-

* Το κατεχον. Dionys. Hal. p. 94. l. 6. Herod. Pind. lft. iii. 3.

sition to, this exaltation of himself above the imperial character and power, could not in the nature of things take place, whilst the Roman empire retained its authority and vigour. He was also to seat himself in the temple of God as a God, i. e. actually to intrude himself into the supreme power, actually to exercise a power and authority superiour to every God, as seated on his throne in God's temple. This is the proud stile of Empire and dominion. Thus Babylon of old, *I am and none else besides me, I shall not sit as a widow*, Isai. xlvii. 8. the very language of mystical Babylon: she saith in her heart: *I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*, Rev. xviii. 7. I sit on my throne, and fear not the diminution of my power, or the loss of my empire. A form of speech, expressive of the real exercise of empire and authority, not unknown even to profane writings, and is really an elegant manner of denoting the actual exercise of sovereign power. Now this usurpation of supreme authority in the temple of God, or christian church, could not commence, nor exert itself, whilst the imperial power of Rome maintain its sovereignty and state; and therefore that which hindered or prevented the man of sin from this exorbitant pride, and from assuming this sovereign and universal majesty, and empire was, and could be nothing else, but the imperial power and empire of Rome, which was in heighth in the apostle's days, had brought all other kingdoms into subjection to it, and was too strong for any other power, spiritual or temporal, to make any successful opposition to; and in this many of the ancient fathers of the christian church understood it. Tertullian, in his apology for the christians, in answer to the charge that they were unconcerned for the safety of the emperor, says*: "The christians were under a particular necessity of praying for the emperors, and for the continued state of the empire; because we know, that that dreadful power, which hangs over the whole world, and the conclusion of the age which threatens the most horrible evils, is retarded or delayed, by the time appointed for the continuance of the Roman empire. This is what we would not experience, and whilst we pray it may be deferred, we hereby shew our good will to the perpetuity of the Roman state." There is an evident allusion in these words to this prophecy of St. Paul, even the Romanists themselves being judges, though they pretend to be at a loss to find out who this man of sin is, and when he came †.

The same father is more express in his treatise of the resurrection, where after having cited this passage of St. Paul at length, he adds to those words: 'until he be taken out of the way: Who? But the Roman empire, which being dispersed into ten kings, shall introduce antichrist, chap. xxiv.

And it is evident from hence, why the apostle expresses himself in so covert and obscure a manner; because had he plainly spoken of the dissolution of the Roman empire, and of a power that should succeed it, and arise in the christian church, it would have been looked on as treason against the imperial power, and probably have excited the Romans to endeavour the absolute extirpation of the christian name, to prevent if possible this prediction or threatening from ever being accomplished. The poets especially, and some other of the Roman writers, had flattered the Roman emperors, with the eternal duration of their empire ‡; and they had vanity enough to imagine that it should never come to an end.

* Apol. p. 31.

† Rigalt. Obs. in Loc. Vid. Theoph. in Loc.

‡ *His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora pono.*

Imperium sine fine dedi. Virg. *Ænead.* i. v. 281. 282.

And therefore the apostle prudently avoids talking openly of the dissolution of the empire, that he might not raise ill will and malice against the christians as disaffected to the Roman government, and wishing its destruction; and contents himself with saying: *you know, what now withholds*, or prevents the appearance of the man of sin. You remember what I told you, and it would not be safe publicly to mention it, or to speak more plainly of the affair.

And the reason why this public appearance was now prevented, was *that he might be revealed** *in his own time*, or discovered in that season, which was appointed and fixed in the course of God's providence, for his impious usurpations to take place. Things were not yet ripe for introducing this event; the time for it was yet at a distance, and whilst the imperial power of Rome maintained its authority, it would effectually prevent this new empire from rising on the ruins of it; though even in the apostle's time the foundations of it were laying, and steps taking to introduce and establish it. And therefore he adds:

TEXT.

COMMENTARY.

Ver. 7. *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. Only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

A mystery is somewhat secret and undiscovered, and the mystery of iniquity is a secret and concealed iniquity, that lies hidden and works covertly; and though this expression is censured by the critics as an Hebraism, or improper Greek, yet it is used by an author of unquestionable authority, who almost in the words of the apostle speaks of discovering the mysteries of feigned virtue, and concealed wickedness †. This mysterious hidden iniquity the apostle speaks of was working in his days, i. e. 'as the word signifies, exerting itself, to bring about its designs, and endeavouring to lay the foundations of its exorbitant power and grandeur.' And as this power was to be erected and exercised in the temple or church of God, the secret workings that are here spoken of, must be of the same kind, and preparative to and introductory of the power that was hereafter to take place; and therefore must refer to the corruption of the christian doctrine, and to that spirit of pride and ambition, and love of pre-heminence and authority and riches, which the apostle himself saw the beginning of; and which he warned the Ephesian elders of: *I know this, that after my departure, shall grievous wolves enter in amongst you, not sparing the flock: also of yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them*, Acts xx. 29, 30. During the lives of the apostles, this corruption of the faith, and aspiring disposition, could not proceed far, because their influence and authority checked and prevented it. But they saw it in its first beginnings and rise, and the apostle here foretels that it should operate and go on, till all obstruction to its arising to its full height should be removed.

The mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way: or as the words may, and should have been rendered: *This mystery of iniquity now worketh only until he, who restrains, or keeps it in, be taken out of the way*, i. e. 'this secret wickedness now operates, and exerts itself in this hidden concealed manner, only till the time that he who now prevents its

* Herod. εις το αποκαλυφθηναι.

† παντα εκκαλυπτειν μυστηρια της τε δοκσης αρετης και αγνοουμενης κακίας. Dionys. Hal. V. 2. p. 212. l. 36.

more open advances and usurpations, he removed out of the way. And then, when this obstruction is gone, that wicked one shall be openly and publicly revealed. Almost all interpreters suppose the sentence to be defective, and supply it according to their different sentiments. But it is in reality full and complete, and needs no supplement at all. The thing asserted by the apostle is, that this wicked spirit was now working, though in a more secret, covert manner, but should continue to operate in this manner, only till he who obstructed or prevented its more open advances, should be removed out of the way: then it should act openly, and without reserve or disguise. And therefore the true literal rendering of the passage, without any supplement, is: *For this mystery of iniquity is now operating, only till he who obstructs it be removed out of the way**, i. e. 'till the imperial power of Rome be wholly destroyed.' The expression, *till he be taken out of the way*, imports force and violence; many of the Roman emperors being destroyed by violent deaths, and the empire itself not dissolved but after the most dreadful struggles and confusions.

But when this great event shall take place, when the obstructing power is removed, when the empire of Rome is dissolved, then

T E X T.

Ver. 8. *Shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That wicked one, in the original it is, *that lawless one*, who sets himself up above all laws, human and divine, intruding himself openly as a God. He *shall be revealed*, appear to the world in his proper claims and characters, and usurpations; act no longer by mysterious concealed methods, but by open violence and force, and actually exercise that impious power which he claims.

Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, i. e. 'as it is generally explained, wholly destroy with the greatness of his indignation, or by some signal and exemplary judgment inflicted on him. I deny not but this may be true, and firmly believe that there is some some peculiar vengeance reserved for the final destruction of this lawless one.' But it doth not appear to me to be the proper sense of this place. The word we render *consume* is frequently used of a gradual lingering consumption and destruction, either of the waste of time, or the consumption of an estate, or of the slow and horrid death of being devoured and eaten up of worms; in all which cases, and others that might be mentioned, there is necessarily implied somewhat that is gradual and progressive; and I apprehend that the apostle intended to convey to us the same idea in the place before us, meaning whom the Lord shall *gradually destroy*, or *consume by the spirit of his mouth*; whereby is expressed the manner or means by which this progressive destruction should befall him. *By the breath or spirit of his mouth*. The mouth is the instrument of speech, and by our breath or the air we breathe, we are enabled to form sounds; and *the breath of his mouth* is, as I apprehend, a figurative expression to denote the word of his gospel, and the facility and ease by which this destruction should be hereby accomplished. *The spirit or breath of his mouth*, is in the nature

* Εκ μεσση γερνηται. Εκ μεσση ανελειν. Demost. apud Grot. in Loc.

of it a figurative expression, and points out nothing so naturally as the words of any person, which the mouth and breath are the principal instruments of forming*. Now the gospel is peculiarly denoted under the character of the word of Christ, which was partly spoken by the Lord himself, and afterwards by those who were instructed and inspired by his Holy Spirit. And by this method the lawless one should be gradually consumed; the word or gospel of Christ having doomed him to absolute destruction, and as the prevalence of the gospel doctrines, in their original simplicity and truth, should make the impioufness of his pretensions, and his corruptions of christianity, and the impostures with which he supported them, appear to the full conviction of the sober and inquisitive part of mankind, and thereby gradually draw off the christian nations from following and adhering to him. This is evidently the meaning of that expression, several times used in the Revelations, of *the two-edged sword proceeding out of Christ's mouth*, Apoc. xix. 15. which even Grotius †, who explains this prophecy quite another way, interprets of the gospel doctrine, and particularly of the threatnings of God against wicked men. As also of that expression of the prophet Isaiah, to which the apostle in the place before us seems probably to allude. *He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*, Isaiah xi. 4. i. e. by his prophets pronounce their destruction, and by his providence accomplish it. So here: the Lord *shall destroy this lawless one by the breath of his mouth*, i. e. 'doom him to destruction by his righteous sentence, and gradually accomplish it by the prevalence of his word of truth and righteousness.

And this the apostle farther illustrates by adding: *and destroy by the brightness of his coming*. Destroy καταργησι. The word we render *destroy* properly signifies, and is explained by one of the Greek commentators ‡ by, *render ineffectual*, viz. by stripping him of his power, and preventing the force and influence of his proud pretensions and usurpations; and in the seventy translation it is used to denote hindering, or putting a stop to, or causing any persons to cease from what they were about, and so to take away their authority and power, and render them unactive, by the prevalence of a superior force, Ezra iv. 21. 23. and v. 5. and vi. 8. A sense perfectly suitable to this place, and that denotes the nature of that destruction or consumption which is here spoken of. The Lord shall destroy him, break his power, bring down his authority, reduce him to a state of inactivity, so that his interest, influence, and impostures shall be brought to nothing, and become void of efficacy and strength; and that *by the brightness of his coming*. The coming of Christ is used of very different events. Sometimes of his final coming to judgment, in which sense some understand it here, making the destruction of this man of sin, and the coming of Christ to judgment contemporary events. But this opinion hath no probability to support it. Sometimes it denotes the clear manifestation of the gospel doctrine and religion, and the prevalence of it amongst mankind; which I take to be the true sense of the expression in the passage under consideration. Christ shall destroy the man of sin *by the breath of his mouth*, the doctrines of his gospel; and *the brightness of his coming*, i. e. 'the clear and glorious manifestation of the sacred truths of his religion, in which

* Ælian. V. Hist.

† Grot. in Loc.

‡ Theoph. in Loc.

sense the word we render brightness is used by profane writers; viz. to denote the honour, splendor, and dignity of a person's appearance*; Christ then coming amongst men and appearing truly glorious, when his gospel prevails; which when it hath a free course and is glorified must gradually destroy and weaken the power of all falsehood and imposture. So that as the man of sin erected his ungodly power upon the ruins of the gospel truth; thus the coming of Christ by the revival of that truth should destroy the empire of the man of sin; and it should be consumed by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness, the dignity, glory and splendor of his coming. I would only add, that the word here used by the apostle, to denote this advent or coming of Christ, is applied with great propriety; being used by profane writers to denote the appearance of great and illustrious persons, and particularly of the Gods themselves†. Instances enough of which might be produced if there was occasion.

And I think this interpretation is farther confirmed by what the apostle adds, concerning the secret and deceitful manner of the coming of this son of perdition, which seems to stand in direct opposition to the open, glorious manifestation of the truth and doctrine of Christ.

T E X T.

Ver. 9, 10. *Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Whose coming is after, or according to the working of Satan, i. e. 'almost invisibly and imperceptibly, 'but yet powerfully and effectually.' The word we render, *working*, hath a very strong signification, and is used to denote a very forcible kind of operation and agency, that secures its intention and purposes; and the sense is heightened by the addition of the word *Satan*, whose agency is but too effectual, and whose endeavours so powerful, that they seldom fail of success; and whose methods are those of miracles, signs, and lying wonders: and in this respect the apostle declares, that the man of sin should be like him, and appear and raise himself to his authority in the temple of God, by *all power and signs, and lying wonders*; or, as the words should have been rendered, *by all lying miracles, and signs, and wonders*; the word *lying* being applicable to each of the other words: it is not easy exactly to limit the meaning, and particularly to shew the difference of these three words. It is sufficient to remark in general, that they denote all those kind of miraculous appearances and operations, by which even truth itself, and a real mission from God, can be supported and established: this man of sin should pretend to them to all, and impose on his followers by every kind of lying miracles, and signs, and wonders, to establish his corruptions and usurped power; miracles, and signs, and wonders, feigned and counterfeit, not real and substantial; tricks done by imposture and fraud, by subtlety and sleight of hand, which he should vend and boast of as true miracles and wonders.

* Dionys. Hal. V. 2. p. 280. l. 22. & p. 418. l. 38.

† Diodor. Sic. p. 25. D. Herod. i. 3. 13. et vi. 7. 6.

And with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness; or, as the words might have been more intelligibly rendered, with every kind of unrighteous deceit, or with all deception of unrighteousness: he should scruple no methods of iniquity, none of the most artful works of wickedness, to delude others, and support his own usurpations; methods however that should have no efficacy, and find no credit, but amongst them *that perish*, who were fitted and doomed to destruction, *because* they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*; *καὶ ἐδέξαντο*, did not entertain, give a kind reception to, cultivate and cherish that sincere regard, and affectionate concern for the gospel truth, which would have preserved them from these fatal delusions, and kept them safe to the obtaining eternal salvation: and these words are, I think, a very strong proof, that this whole prophecy relates to a real apostacy from the faith and doctrine of Christ, even in the christian church; and cannot be with any reason expounded of one or two particular impostors, that should arise for a little while, and perish almost all as soon as they appeared. The prophecy evidently speaks of a person seated in power, of the exercise of various kinds of imposture, of the delusions of all sorts of frauds to be actually practised, of the full success of these frauds, and of an indifference to, or hatred of, truth and righteousness, as the cause of this success: circumstances that evidently point out length of time, and a series of years, and cannot with any reason or shew of probability, be understood of one or two low and mean kind of deceivers, who pretended to wonders and did none, and in whose destruction there appeared no immediate interposition or hand of Providence. The man of sin, the intruder of himself into the temple as a God, the boaster of miracles, signs, and wonders, that was first to work covertly, then openly, that was to deceive unrighteous men, corrupt the doctrine of the christian church, and to be the head and conductor of an open, visible apostacy from the faith of Christ, and to be himself gradually destroyed by the word of Christ, and the revival of his truth, is one and the same, and cannot be interpreted of different persons, consistent with the plainest words of the prophecy: and there is but one interpretation or application of the prophecy that will suit all the several parts of it; and that is, that which applies it to the church of Rome.

Let me now observe, that an upright honest regard to truth and righteousness is the surest preservative in the world against destructive errors; this will teach men to see through the most artful methods of deceitful impostors, and enable them to escape those delusions that prove the ruin of many: men should therefore be cautious not to judge of principles as they favour their lusts and passions, and tend to make them easy in a vicious course: this is a certain road to destruction; but laying aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisy, as new-born children receive their milk, they should receive the word of God with an unfeigned love, that they may grow thereby, and so be finally saved.

The apostle having expressly foretold the great defection or apostacy that should take place in the christian church, the manner by which it should be carried on,

* *Αὐτὸν ὡς. Eo quod.* Sic Lucian. Reviv. p. 393. Dial. Deor. p. 185. Lys. Orat. p. 19. 62. 261. l. 2.

and the success with which it should be attended ; proceeds to vindicate the providence of God in the permission of this event, and thus concludes the prophecy.

T E X T.

Ver. 11, 12. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The words, *for this cause*, evidently refer to the preceding ones, assigning the reason of the prevalence of this apostacy and delusion, viz. because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. They did not cultivate and cherish that sincere affection and regard for truth, which would have secured their salvation ; and because they were destitute of this rational disposition, the apostle says, *that God should send them strong delusion*. God's sending doth not mean, his giving the man of sin any immediate and positive order to practice his impostures amongst them, and to deceive them to their destruction ; but his not hindering, his permitting him for wise reasons to appear amongst them, and delude them by his frauds and pretended miracles ; men who cherish not the love of truth being the proper persons for cunning seducers to practice upon, and naturally liable to be corrupted by falsehood and deceit : and the very rise and progress of this man of sin, evidently shews the real permission of Providence ; and his being allowed only to deceive those who embraced not the love of the truth, as plainly demonstrates the wisdom and equity of the permission, whereby their very punishment appears to be the natural effect of their wickedness ; deception into error by impostors, being the necessary consequence of a disposition, destitute of the love of truth : nor doth the expression of God's sending them strong delusion, imply more than the permission of his Providence ; the like strong words in profane writers having just the same signification. Thus one of the most ancient orators of Greece *, in his pleadings against a criminal, who voluntarily returned from the place he had fled to, and put himself upon his trial ; in answer to the objection that he would not have returned, had he been conscious to his having been guilty, replies, ' As to his return, I believe some one of the Gods hath brought him to this punishment, that after having escaped a remarkable danger, he should obtain a shameful and infamous death : ' for, as he adds, ' the Gods delight to do nothing more, than to discover the disposition of wicked men. ' After which he subjoins this remarkable passage from one of the ancient poets, which though expressed in stronger terms than what St. Paul here used, yet means nothing more than the wise permission, over-ruling, and conduct of Providence, viz. " When the anger of the Gods affects any person, it first of all takes from him the good understanding of his mind, and turns him into a much worse resolution and apprehension, so that he shall not understand any of his sins or mistakes ; " which, in the language of the sacred writings is : *Make their heart fat, their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed*, *Isai. vi. 9, 10.*

What the apostle predicts that God would thus by the wise permission of his providence send amongst them, was, *a strong delusion*. The expression in the original is peculiarly emphatical, *the efficacy* of delusion or imposture ; such impos-

* Lycurg. Orat. adver. Leocrat. p. 155, 156.

ture as should be eventually effectual, upon account of their being void of the love of truth; insomuch that they should, as the apostle adds, *believe or credit a lie*: they received not the love of truth; they therefore naturally lay open to falsehood; they would not embrace the sacred truth of the gospel, and therefore they must entertain that error, those false and lying doctrines that were contrary to and subversive of it; the consequence of which could not but be, *that they might all be damned*, judged, and condemned by the righteous sentence of God, and punished as worthy of it on a double account; both for their dispossessing themselves of the love of truth, and for their receiving error and imposture in the room of it; and that through a prevailing love of wickedness and vice. For thus the apostle concludes this whole account, "That they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, *but had pleasure in unrighteousness*:" this evidently shews, that it was not the mere simple ignorance of truth, that thus exposed them to condemnation. This, had they not been favoured with the means of knowledge, had been rather their unhappiness than their sin. What thus exposed them to the delusions of imposture, and rendered them fit objects of the divine vengeance, and prepared them for destruction, was their banishing the love of truth out of their minds, and their taking pleasure in iniquity. Truth was contrary to their vices, and therefore they rejected all affection for it: *They took pleasure in iniquity*; the word signifies, 'intirely to approve and acquiesce in any thing as a matter of their choice, and perfectly agreeable to them *;' and as they thus acquiesced with full approbation in wickedness and immorality, they embraced imposture rather than truth, because favourable to their vices, and consistent with the indulgence of the most criminal passions and affections. All these circumstances considered, the day of judgment could not but be at a considerable distance; since these several important events were first to take place, and come to pass in their several respective periods.

And from what hath been said in explication of this prophecy, I think it is impossible we should be at a loss how or where to apply it: every part of it is such a perfect description of the papacy of the church of Rome, that if St. Paul had been alive, and seen the usurpations and pride, and apostacy of that See, he could scarce have described it in stronger and livelier colours, or by more peculiar and distinguishing characteristics than he hath done in the prophecy before us.

Having thus described this grand apostacy, and the character of those who should be deceived and ruined by it; he expresses his good hopes concerning the Thessalonian converts, and tells them for their comfort, That he had the highest reason of thankfulness to God on their account, and the fullest assurance that they should be preserved from the destructive delusions of such an apostacy.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 13, 14. *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, to God for you brethren, beloved* i. e. 'on your account, and in your behalf:' We look on it as our duty to be continually thankful to God,

* Εὐδοκῶντος τῆς Τάτης. *Consentiente approbante Tatio.* Dion. H. 102. 35. τῇ ἀρεσῇ τῶν ἀνδρῶν—
 γὰρ εὐδοκῶ. Dionys. Hal. V. 1. 520. 43. *penitus acquiesco in electione virorum.*

loved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, thro' sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God, for the sure prospect we have of your establishment in the christian faith, and being preserved from the effects of so dreadful an apostacy :

Brethren, beloved of the Lord. Notwithstanding the superior dignity of his station, and his eminent usefulness as an apostle, he styles them *brethren*, upon account of their relation to God, the common Father of christians ; and because of their faith in Christ, by which they were all constituted the children of God. They were also *beloved of the Lord*, the peculiar objects of his affection and care, such as had a special interest in the protection and favour of Christ : both these characters helped to strengthen the apostle's obligation to bless God on their account, whenever he remembered the success he had amongst them, and how he had been instrumental to their conversion ; especially as he had reason to conclude :

That God had chosen them to salvation, and saw the full evidences of God's intention of mercy and goodness towards them. The word *ΕΙΛΕΤΟ*, signifies a voluntary favourable designation, appointment, and choice of a person, to any particular purpose and end ; not such a choice as necessarily secures the end, or is inconsistent with the refusal of the person so chosen to accept the favour intended him. Thus one of the historians tells us *, "that when Antonine, the son of Severus the Roman emperor was killed, the soldiers *chose* (the word the apostle here uses,) Audentius for emperor ; but that he alledging old age in excuse, refused to accept the empire : they offered him the honour, but he would not accept of it." Thus God chose the Thessalonians to salvation, offered them the benefit, and called them to the means of it, and made it fully appear that he intended and designed them this invaluable favour. The choice here spoken of, is evidently such a one, as had grounds of certainty attending it ; for the apostle speaks of it with full assurance, as a matter that he knew, and for which he was bound in duty to return thanks to God : and by consequence cannot relate to any such absolute and eternal choice of every one of the Thessalonian converts, without exception to salvation, as should necessarily and infallibly, and finally secure that event. This the word never signifies, nor could St. Paul know it without such a revelation from God, as we have no ground to think he was ever favoured with. The choice of God therefore here spoken of, is such a free and gracious designation and appointment of them to the gospel salvation, as carried its own certainty and proof with it, and according to the proper meaning of the original word, implies only his graciously making the offers of it ; giving them the choice of it, calling them to the means of obtaining it, and making it fully appear to them, that he intended them this invaluable blessedness ; a benefit they could never have expected or obtained, but from the merciful assurance, and voluntary offer of God ; and this they had from the beginning : *He hath from the beginning † chosen you to salvation*, i. e. 'not from eternity, which hath no beginning, but from the beginning of my preaching the gospel amongst you, and your being called by it to the knowledge and belief of the truth.' Thus St. John, 1 John ii. 7. *A new commandment write I not unto you, but the old commandment which ye have had from*

* Herod. iv. 14. 3. 4.

† *Vulgata versio reddidit primitias, et legit, ἀπαρχας.*

the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning: And again, Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning, ver. 24. i. e. 'from the first publication of the gospel doctrine:' So here, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.* 'It appears from the time of my first entrance amongst you, and preaching the gospel to you, that God intended you the benefit of salvation, and chose you by his mercy to this invaluable favour.' But how did this appear? How did God chuse them to salvation?

By sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. This was both the means and the evidence of that choice; so that this choice cannot possibly refer to any eternal secret choice of God, but the actual choice of them, by the gift of the Spirit, and their belief of the gospel truth.

He chose them to salvation *by sanctification of the Spirit.* The word we render *sanctification*, hath a peculiar and emphatical meaning in profane writers, and denotes 'those rites and sacred ceremonies, by which persons were expiated from their former guilt, and thereby supposed to be consecrated and reconciled to the Gods, and that sanctity and purity which was the consequence of such an expiation * : Upon this account it is joined with sacrifices, because sacrifices generally or always attended such kind of expiations, and were necessary to them. Hence it is by the seventy interpreters with great propriety used to signify, the consecration of persons and things to God, i. e. the separating and appropriating them from common uses to his peculiar worship and service: and this gives an excellent meaning to the place before us. Jews and Gentiles were in a state of great corruption and guilt, and therefore unclean in his sight, and could have no reasonable hope of his mercy and favour: Now there needed a double provision effectually to recover them to God; to give them assurance of his favour, and to prepare them for the blessing of eternal salvation. By the Spirit, in his extraordinary gifts, God gave them the assurance that he had accepted them; this was the wonderful evidence and sure token that God had sanctified, i. e. cleansed, absolved, and freed them from the pollution and guilt of their former state, and separated them to himself, from the corruptions of the world to his own peculiar service: and notwithstanding the demerits of their past sins, to be his church, people, and children; and this is the primary and literal sense unquestionably of all those passages, where we read of the first fruits of the spirit, the earnest of our adoption, the spirit of adoption, and the like phrases; which all refer to those extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, by which God declared, that he had elected and chosen them as his people to salvation, and which was the public and authentic act by which the certainty of that choice was confirmed. This was their external sanctification, that sacred rite by which they were visibly appropriated and consecrated to be his church, and initiated into all the privileges of it.

But then as this external purification, or consecration of them to these sacred purposes, was not sufficient to render them worthy and capable of the blessing of salvation, as this was properly not the reason, but the visible evidence, the public confirmation, of their choice or election, St. Paul farther adds, *God had chosen them to salvation by belief of the truth*, i. e. 'by bringing them to the knowledge and belief of the gospel doctrine, by the apostle's preaching and mini-

* Dion. Hal. p. 26. l. 1. et p. 16. 47. Diod. Sic. p. 244. l. 3. Hesych. Suid.

† See Notes on 1 Thess. iv. 4

stry; their being brought to the belief of the gospel was their choice to salvation. He was sent to them with the offers of salvation in the name of God, to let them know what were the fixed terms upon which it might be obtained, and to give them full assurances that God was ready to confer it on them: The Thessalonians did not receive this grace of God in vain; they received the gospel religion, and believed the great doctrines and principles of it, and by this means became entitled to the promise of salvation that was made them, i. e. became of the number of those whom God had actually chosen to it, of the certainty of which choice they were confirmed by the consecration of that Spirit, which was the evidence of their adoption, and given them in consequence of their faith; so that these words shew the form and manner of their election, and not the end to which they were chosen: they were actually chosen by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; his bringing them to the gospel faith, and imparting to them the Spirit, was their formal and proper choice: faith gave them an actual right to the privileges of salvation; the consecration of the Spirit was their formal and public investiture with it. The original words in their construction necessarily confine us to this sense, and cannot without violence be understood to denote any thing else; but the manner and form of God's chusing them to salvation, as may be made appear by many passages of like construction, from the most unquestionable authorities*.

*Whereunto adds the apostle, he hath called you by our gospel, Εἰς δ', i. e. 'to which choice, salvation, sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, God hath called you;' the neutral word in the original including all these: their call and their choice were different things, and their being actually brought to this sanctification and faith, in which their election consisted, is an evident proof, that the choice or election spoken of, cannot mean an eternal election actually made before the call; it being absurd to affirm, that persons can be called to an election already past and over: their being called to sanctification and faith, evidently proves that their choice was yet depending, and that it could not take place till their actual faith in Jesus Christ, and that they could know nothing of it with any certainty, till their purification and consecration by the Spirit. To these blessings, and consequently to that election that was included in, and ascertained by them; they were called by St. Paul's gospel, that gospel which he was ordered to preach to the Gentile world, viz. that all men are made the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, without any need of conformity to the rights and ceremonies of the Jewish law: and the great end of this call was *to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ*†. They were called to be partakers of God's election to salvation, sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, that they might finally obtain that glory and blessedness, to which Christ himself was advanced in the heavenly state; according to Christ's prayer, that where he was there they might be to behold his glory, and share in it according to their measure and degree.*

Having thus expressed his thankfulness to God, for the assurance he had of their being preserved from delusion and imposture, and chosen to salvation, he

* *Εν ἀγίᾳσμα.* Vid. librum Gr. Particul.

† *Εἰς περιποίησιν.* Hesych. *πλεονασμος. κτησις.* *Τοῖς δὲ δι' ἀρετὴν περιποιησάμενοις δοξάν.* *Qui virtute sibi compararunt gloriam.* Diod. Sic. p. 2. b. *εαυτῷ ἀθανάτου περιποιήντα δοξάν.* p. 51. b.

adds an exhortation to steadfastness and constancy in that faith and profession, to which they had been called by the gospel of Christ.

TEXT.

Ver. 15. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.*

COMMENTARY.

This exhortation is perfectly suited to the nature of the subject he had been treating of, apostacy from true religion, and their own choice to salvation by the belief of the truth; and may be looked on as a farther explication of the nature of that apostacy, and as a general rule of direction to christians in all ages of the church, how to secure themselves from all kind of delusion and imposture whatsoever, viz. by adhering steadfastly to those things which the apostle had delivered.

Therefore brethren stand fast. Since those must perish who receive not the love of the truth, and God hath chosen you to salvation by the belief of it; *stand fast*, viz. in your adherence to it. The word *σηκετε*, is used to denote great firmness, constancy, and resolution in maintaining our purposes, standing unmoveably against, and vigorously resisting all opposition from an enemy*: so that the exhortation means; 'firmly oppose, never yield to any corruption of the doctrine I have taught you; stand your ground against all attempts to pervert you from it: adhere invariably to that sacred truth ye have been called to the belief of.'

And hold the traditions which ye have been taught. The word *κρατειτε* signifies to hold by conquest, and therefore firmly to maintain what we have in possession; and is therefore here added with great propriety after the exhortation *to stand fast*; possession being the sure fruit of standing our ground, and a resolute opposition to our enemies: the meaning therefore is, 'constantly retain, and never part with the traditions ye have been taught.' The original word *παρδοσηις*, sometimes signifies, something unwritten, preserved, and transmitted down from one generation and age to another; and in this sense we generally use the English word *tradition*: but that is not the meaning of it in the place before us, where it denotes, not what they had received by such a kind of long tradition, derived from one to another through various successions, but what they had actually received and been taught by the apostle himself in person; and therefore would more properly have been rendered †, "institutions or doctrines:" hold firmly the doctrines ye have been taught, *whether by word, or our epistle*; or, as the passage should have been unquestionably rendered, *whether by our word or letter*; the term *our*, referring equally to both. *Whether by our word*, i. e. 'whether by us in person, when we preached the gospel amongst you; or whether by our epistle, either formerly or now written; the doctrines I preached to you in person, or instructed you in by letter, being of equal truth and authority, and therefore equally worthy your firm belief of and adherence to.'

After this advice, he concludes the whole subject, according to his usual custom, with a warm and affectionate prayer for them.

* Dionys. Hal. Ant. R. p. 439. 47.

† The delivery of a person to death. *παρδοσιν θανατω*. Dion. Hal. p. 428. 24. V. 1. *ισοριας δυναμις τον χρονον εχει φυλακα της αιωνις παρδοσεως, τοις επιγινομενοις*. Diod. Sic. p. 3. c.

‡ *Παρδοσεων. διδασκαλιων*. Hesych.

TEXT.

Ver. 16, 17. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.*

COMMENTARY.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself comfort your hearts! In the verse but one foregoing, the apostle had told them, that they were called to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore having last mentioned him, he prays, that Christ, to whose glory they were called, might comfort and establish them; he having received all gifts for the benefit of his church, and being the true repository of all the benefits of salvation.

From him he rises to the great original, and source of all goodness, God himself, whom he describes under the character of a Father: *God even our Father*, equally our Father as of the Jews. *God our Father who hath loved us*, who bears the same affection to us converted Gentiles as he ever did to them, and hath given us the most substantial proofs of his love, in chusing us to salvation by the consecration of his Spirit, and belief of the truth, and hath called us by the gospel to obtain the glory of Christ. *God our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation*; a consolation, Heb. vi. 18. founded upon immutable promises, derived from eternal objects, John xiv. 16. of which none can deprive us, and which is the real earnest of immortal blessedness. *God our Father who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope.* Chilo, one of the ancient philosophers*, being asked, wherein wise and well-instructed persons differed from or excelled ignorant and unlearned ones, answered*, 'in the good hopes they entertained;' which surely may be said with infinitely greater reason of all sincere christians, whose hopes are fixed upon the noblest objects, and supported by the surest foundations. The expression of *good hope*, is frequently to be met with in ancient writers; and by it they mean the hopes of future prosperity, even when in circumstances of distress and danger; the hopes of the continuance of the prosperity they have; the hopes of glory and immortal honour from great and worthy actions†; and hopes which have solid grounds to establish and maintain them‡. And in all these respects the hopes God hath given us as christians, are peculiarly good, since whatever are our afflictions, we have hope of a comfortable issue out of them; whatever are our most valuable blessings we may justly hope for the security of them; whatever really good and excellent actions we perform, we may hope that no part of our labour shall be in vain, but that they shall be really rewarded with immortal glory; and all these blessed hopes are supported by as sure a foundation, as the reasons of things, and the irrevocable promise of God himself can afford us.

And this good hope we have *through grace*. It is certain that the original words render *through grace*, signify in foreign writers, either freely and voluntarily, without price or purchase, or through favour and affection§; and this sense is perfectly reconcilable to the place before us: *God hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*, i. e. 'freely and voluntarily without any previous obligation, out of his mere affection and good-will towards us.' And thus the apostle

* Diog. Laert. l. 1. §. 67.

† Pind. Ist. viii. 32, 33.

‡ Hippoc. Ep. ad Damag. p. 922. l. 4.

§ Dionys. Hal. V. 1. p. 685. l. 11.

uses it in Rom. v. 15. 1 Cor. x. 30. and in several other places; *The gift by grace*, is the gift bestowed merely through favour and mercy: and as this is the general, if not constant sense of it in the New Testament, we need not look for any other meaning in the place before us.

Now the prayer to God, under this amiable and encouraging description of him, for them is: *That he would comfort their hearts*, by supporting them under their afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the gospel, by these everlasting consolations of his mercy, and those good hopes of salvation, and of finally obtaining the glory of Christ, which by his own grace he had been pleased to afford them; and in order to this, that he would *establish them in every good word and work*. The original word we render *establish*, sometimes signifies to underprop and support, and sometimes to render any thing firm and secure, so as to preserve it from sliding or falling*; and the meaning of the moral sense in which it is here used is, That God would so confirm and fix them in every thing that was good, that they might never fall or be perverted from it, but continue immoveable *in every good word and work*, i. e. as Grotius explains it, 'that they might always speak and act agreeable to their christian character: but as the gospel doctrine is frequently denoted under this expression of *the word*, I think the meaning is, 'that God would secure their continuance in all those good and excellent principles of the gospel truth, in which he had instructed them, and in all those good works of virtue and piety, to which the gospel doctrine rightly understood, would be sure to influence them.

The DOCTRINES and PRACTICAL INFERENCES from this portion of Scripture are these.

I. That Jews and Gentiles were elected to salvation by their believing the gospel, and their purification by the Spirit of God; and that their election did not take place, and could not fully be known, till after each of these; that therefore the best and only evidence of any person's election to salvation, is such a faith in Christ, as effectually purifies and consecrates him to God: and that every such person may be sure God hath chosen him to salvation.

II. That being chosen to salvation, implies in it, being brought to the profession and belief of christianity, by the preaching of the word, and their purification from their former sins by sanctity of heart and life, in order that by perseverance therein, persons may obtain eternal redemption.

III. That wherever the gospel is preached, it is a call to mankind to partake of the benefits of God's election to salvation, an invitation to embrace the truth, and to an intire purification of themselves to God.

IV. That the great comprehensive blessing of the gospel salvation, the end of our faith, and the reward of our purity, is our finally obtaining the glory of Christ, or being glorified together with him.

V. That God is the Father of all sincere christians, which he hath testified to us by his love to us in Christ, and by giving us everlasting consolation and good hope.

VI. That this durable and substantial comfort, and these lively and well-grounded hopes, are owing to the mere mercy and favour of God our Father who hath loved us.

* Diod. Sic. p. 133. a. Pol. l. 1. 235. Homer. Hesych.

VII. That they are the common benefit, and happiness of all sincere believers in Christ without exception.

VIII. That it is the duty of all sincere christians to beware and guard against any attempts to draw them from the gospel, and that the only security against imposture and apostacy is, a fixed adherence to the truths and doctrines taught by the inspired apostles.

IX. That no unwritten traditions of men, that are not agreeable with, or are contrary to, those taught by the apostles in their preaching and letters, ought to be in the least regarded by those, who value the honour and success of christianity and their own final salvation, but ought to be rejected with abhorrence and contempt.

X. That a steady adherence to religion and virtue, in the life and practice, ought to be the constant effect of the acknowledgment and belief of the genuine principles and doctrines of the gospel revelation, and that good works are in their nature equally essential to the christian character, as a sound and genuine faith. And finally,

XI. That our most valuable comforts are to be derived from the love of God, the everlasting consolations he hath given us in the gospel, and the good hopes to which he hath raised us by his grace in Christ; and that as we are intirely dependent on him for all things to enjoy, as he is the original and eternal source of all good, and as it hath pleased him that all fulness of grace should constantly dwell in Christ, ministers are to pray for their people, and all christians for themselves, and one another to God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the one as the fountain, the other as the great conveyer, that they may be strengthened and encouraged, and comforted under all the difficulties of their christian life, and that they may be supported blameless to the end, in all the good works of a christian obedience. My hearty prayer therefore for my readers is, That our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, may comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

The apostle having finished the subject, which was the more immediate and direct design of his letter, viz. having shewn them, that however unknown the time of our Lord's second appearance to judgment was, yet that it was very far from being certain that he should come during their lives; proceeds in the close of it, to set before them such practical directions, as were suitable to their christian profession, and the particular circumstances they themselves were in.

CHAP. III.

TEXT.

Ver. 1, 2. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable*

COMMENTARY.

Finally. All that remains for me to add is, the few following plain and necessary directions: *Brethren, pray for us.* He had concluded the former subject of his letter, with a very solemn and affectionate prayer for them, and now asks theirs in return for himself; not so much indeed for himself, as for

unreasonable and wicked men; for the propagation and success of that gospel which for all men have not faith. he preached. *Pray for, or concerning us; let what*

you pray for on my account be, that the word of the Lord may have a free course. The word of the Lord, or, as some copies have it, the word of God, is the everlasting gospel, which he preached to the Gentiles; pray in our behalf, that this may have a free course. In the original it is, *may run*, i. e. in the figurative sense of the word, may spread itself amongst all nations with the greatest speed, without any thing to obstruct its course, or prevent its progress; running being the swiftest motion of which we are capable, and the quickest method of arriving to any place, we desire to reach. I cannot help thinking, that the apostle hath in this word a farther reference, viz. to the courses that were run by the ancient racers, who had the ground they were to run over fixed and described for them, and who were to run it with the greatest speed, in order to obtain the prize of glory. And in this sense the apostle unquestionably uses this very word, *I run, not as uncertainly: So run that ye may obtain*, 1 Cor. ix. 26. 24. *Ye have run well*, Gal. v. 7. and in several other places, in plain allusion to the ancient races. And in this sense the word is used singly by Homer *, and other writers of unquestionable authority †. And the allusion in this place, is evidently with great propriety and beauty; the course of the gospel being directed to all nations, and designed to extend to the uttermost ends of the earth. And therefore the apostle exhorts them to pray for him, that the gospel he preached might freely run its appointed course, so as to be glorified, i. e. so as to obtain the glory and honour of success, or so as to be celebrated and praised, and every where admired upon this account; this being the certain effect of victory and success, viz. to be crowned with honour, and universally spoken of with esteem and praise. The apostle adds, *Even as it is with you*, i. e. 'even as it hath had its free course, and been glorified amongst you.' This is giving them the highest commendation, and speaking in the handsomest and most respectful manner of them: he wished the gospel might every where find as large and speedy a progress as it had amongst them, and become as truly glorious in the conversion of others, as it had been in theirs.

And as this course of the gospel was like to meet with great obstruction in the world, from the hatred, malice, and other vices of bad men, the apostle therefore subjoins, *that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.* It was no unusual thing in the ancient races, for those that ran to obstruct one another by force or fraud, so as to prevent their obtaining success, and that reward which was the fruit of it; as appears from Homer ‡ and Virgil §, who in their several accounts of this game, have particularly mentioned this circumstance; and therefore that nothing might retard and prevent the course of the gospel, and its becoming glorious amongst all nations by its success, the apostle exhorts them to pray, that *he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.* The original word || denotes the rescuing or saving one's country, or any single person from circumstances of imminent danger, and therefore shews, that the apostle was apprehensive of great opposition, and had experienced much hinderance from unreasonable and wicked

* Iliad. †. v. 520.

† Τρεχειν. αγωνιζεσθαι. In stadio currendo certare. Hesych.

‡ Il. †. v. 585. 605.

§ Nam sese opposuit Salio, per lubrica surgens: Æn. 5. v. 335.

Ereptumque dolo reddi sibi poscit honorem. ver. 342.

|| Ρυσσωμεν. Herod. Diod. Sic. l. 1. p. 69. A. Ælian. V. H.

men. The word we render *unreasonable*, hath a very peculiar meaning, and there is scarcely any English word that exactly answers it. The ancient glossaries * variously expound it, by *wicked, filthy, strange, lawless, irrational*, and *absurd*, and by other terms of a like nature. The word properly signifies something *that hath no place*, and therefore by an easy figure that which is *absurd, indecent*, and *unbecoming*, and that consequently raises surprise, upon account of the unexpected absurdity and unfitness of it; and in this sense it is used by the best writers †: and this sense is perfectly agreeable to the place before us: the men he prays to be delivered from, not being as I apprehend the open avowed enemies of the christian name and faith, but men who in their opposition to him, acted a more absurd and unbecoming part, viz. either some of the converted Jews, who obstructed the progress of the gospel, because he did not preach up the necessity of circumcision, or the law of Moses; or other persons, who from criminal views of ambition and interest, endeavoured all they could to depreciate his character, and hinder the success of his labours; and therefore he adds the word *wicked*: That we may be delivered from absurd and wicked men, i. e. 'men either of a malicious or profligate disposition; from all such, who through wicked views or by criminal methods, endeavoured to prevent the free course and success of the word of God.'

He adds as the reason, why they ought thus to pray for him: *For all have not faith*, i. e. as these words are commonly explained, 'All men are not prevailed on to embrace and believe the gospel:' but this however true, seems to carry a low meaning without force or spirit; the Thessalonians needing no information, that all men did not believe the gospel. But the words are capable of another meaning and rendering, which I think better suits the character of the men he desired to be delivered from, viz. *all men are not to be trusted or confided in*; or more literally, *credit or trust is not due to all*. In which sense the word we render *faith*, is frequently used. The persons he had most to fear from, were those absurd and wicked men, who under the cover of the christian profession and character, were his enemies, and therefore whatever zeal and esteem they might profess for the gospel, were not to be trusted; were in reality enemies to it, and opposed the simplicity and purity of it. This mystery of iniquity, the corruption of christianity by christians themselves, the apostle saw the first workings of in his own time, in the opposition made to his own person, character and doctrine; and therefore as such persons were dangerous enemies to christianity, though they professed to believe it, they were unworthy of any confidence; and the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to pray for him, that he might be delivered from them, because he knew they would betray him and the christian doctrine too, whenever they had an opportunity.

But lest this intimation of the treachery of these pretended false christians, should discourage the Thessalonians, he adds for their better comfort:

T E X T.

Ver. 3. *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

In this verse the faithfulness of God is justly opposed to the treachery of those pretended christians, who were not to be confided and trusted in; and the meaning is, There are some who act an absurd unbecoming and unfaithful part, and whose professions of christianity deserve no

* Hesych. Suid.

† Herod. iv. 11. 7. Ælian. V. H.

credit and confidence; yet that God, under whose immediate protection you are, is worthy of your highest confidence and trust. *He is faithful.* Your firmest dependence on his promises can never fail you. He will punctually make good every assurance he hath given you, and therefore establish you, confirm you in your christian profession, and in order to this preserve you from evil, i. e. if we retain this rendering: keep you from all apostacy from the christian faith and profession, whatever may be the endeavours of corrupt and wicked men to pervert you: or, if we render the words, will keep you from the wicked one, the sense will be much the same: he will preserve you from the destructive influence of their temptations and endeavours to seduce you, who are the agents of that evil spirit, who is eminently stiled the wicked one, and who by endeavouring to prevent the success of the gospel, or to corrupt the simplicity of it, do his work, and act by his counsel and instigation.

Having thus encouraged them from the consideration of God's fidelity and goodness, he adds (as a farther ground of his good hope concerning them, that they would do the things he commanded them) the readiness of their past obedience.

T E X T.

Ver. 4. *And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

We have confidence in the Lord, i. e. 'we assure ourselves from the faithfulness and goodness of God, and from his readiness to assist and support you; that he will thus establish you, and keep you from the evil one, *because ye both do, and will do the things we command you.* God will confirm you in your christian course and profession, because you adhere to my doctrine, and obey my orders, and will continue thus to do. You use the proper means of your own security, and from your past conduct I have abundant reason to conclude you will continue to do it; and therefore I trust in God, assure myself from his fidelity and promises, that you shall be immoveably established, and be secured from the influence of all attempts to corrupt and seduce you; and as the most effectual means of their preservation, he prays:

T E X T.

Ver. 5. *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The Lord seems to be here meant of our Lord Jesus Christ: may he *direct your hearts into the love of God.* The original word signifies to carry a person on in a strait way, and therefore in the figurative or moral sense, to lead, direct, and guide them, to form them into such a temper and disposition. And therefore to have the heart directed into the love of God, is to have it disposed and formed into the highest veneration, esteem, and affection for God. This is the noblest security of a christian's obedience and fidelity, especially if to this be added, the patience of Christ, as the words in the original, which we render the patient waiting for Christ, literally signify; and they are thus rendered, Rev. i. 9. The patience of Christ is that patience which Christ exercised, as the patience of Job, is that patience of which he was so great an example, Jam. v. 11. And the meaning of the prayer is, that Christ would direct and form their hearts into the exercise of all that patience and submission, under their afflictions and persecutions, of which

our

our Lord himself was so amiable and glorious a pattern, and by which he was established and kept from the evil one. So that the method by which Christ establishes good men in their christian profession, and preserves them from the power of the evil one, is by forming their minds into the love of God, and into the exercise of a steady and invincible patience.

Having thus prepared them for the directions he had in charge to deliver to them, he proceeds to the exhortation, which he enforces by the authority of Christ, and by putting them in mind of his own conduct and example whilst he was amongst them.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 6. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

We command you, brethren. The word implies an authoritative order, such as generals give to their soldiers*, princes to their subjects, and such as parents and tutors give to their children and pupils. And that this command might come with the greater authority, and secure a better influence over them, he adds: *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. 'in his person,' and by his authority; the apostle acting in the name and by the power of

Christ himself. The matter itself was of the greatest importance to the honour of christianity, and the peace and welfare of the christian church, and therefore needed to be very strongly and solemnly inculcated, viz. *that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.* The word we render withdraw† is used properly to signify a departure, or going from any person or place, as one of the grammarians explains it; the taking a journey whether by land or sea. Another interprets it by being afraid, or withdrawing from any thing through fear‡. Homer and Lucian|| use it for contracting or reefing the sails of a ship, viz. to keep the ship in a slower motion for fear of falling into danger. And from all these accounts, the word seems here to denote, a cautious departure or separation from every professed christian, that should walk disorderly; keeping no more company with him than if we were separated from him by a great distance of land or sea, and so contracting our affection towards him, as to avoid him as a person dangerous to the church, or christian society to which we belong. The walking disorderly of which the apostle speaks, and which is the fault which he here reproveth, he explains at verse 11. "We hear there are some which walk amongst you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies:" and this will lead us to the true meaning of the word disorderly. The original word properly signifies two things§; one who never inlists himself into any soldier-like company or order or employment; or, who being inlisted breaks his

* Herodian. Diod. Sic.

† Eustat. p. 150. l. 34. 35.

‡ Hesych.

|| Iliad. A. 433. Luc. V. i. p. 643. p. 74. Quarto edition.

§ Lycurg. Orat. p. 126. 29. p. 129. 4. &c. p. 130. 1, &c.

rank, and puts others into confusion and disorder. Both these senses are to be met with in the best writers, and either or both of them are agreeable to the place before us: "withdraw from any brother that walks disorderly," i. e. 'who by refusing to work, and thrusting himself into the affairs of others, hath either no fixed rank, station, or order of life in which to employ himself, and thus shamefully declines the post of duty he ought to fill up; or who by leaving his rank, and deserting his station, in which he ought to abide, is the occasion of disorder in the christian church.'

It is observable, that how sharply soever the apostle rebukes this fault, he styles the person committing it *a brother*. He was such as a professed christian, and he was not to be immediately rejected and disowned as such even for his disorderly walking. He was indeed to be withdrawn from as an irregular and dangerous person, and his society to be avoided, that by a free and friendly converse with him, he might not be encouraged in his disorderly practices: but yet, as he retained his christian profession, he was in some respect to be considered as a brother, and to be treated with that brotherly condescension and charity, that might be a probable means of reclaiming him.

And as the apostle particularly points out the fault he intended, under the more general account of disorderly walking, so he gives them a sure rule, by which they might judge, whether the behaviour of any person amongst them was at any time suitable to the good decency and order of the christian church. "Withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." Though his intention was to correct a particular fault; yet the direction here is general. Every man that doth not behave according to the directions of the apostle, i. e. 'who contradicts in his practice those principles and precepts of true religion, which he hath given by authority from Christ, is a disorderly brother and to be avoided. The traditions here spoken of are those things which he delivered to them either in person when he was present with them, or by letter during his absence from them; as appears from verse 15 of the foregoing chapter. It was both their duty and their interest firmly to adhere to them, and make them the rule of their constant behaviour.

Having thus commanded them how to behave towards such irregular and disorderly christians, he recommends the observance of a regular, diligent behaviour from his own example that he had given them, during his abode with them, and appeals to them for the truth of it.

T E X T.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Ver. 7, 8, 9. *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly amongst you. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we* *You yourselves know how ye ought to follow us. You all know that as I preached so I lived, and that as I commanded others to work, so I diligently laboured amongst you myself, and that therefore my example is as truly worthy imitation, as my doctrine is of your belief; and that if you imitate me, it must be by care and diligence in working for your own maintenance and support.*

For

might not be chargeable to any of you; not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

For we behaved not disorderly amongst you; we did not refuse, through sloth and the love of ease, the labours of that station and employment, that were necessary to our securing the provisions of life; we did not act as though we had withdrawn from that rank and post in which it became us to abide, nor in any respect behave ourselves irregularly therein; nor did we eat any man's bread for nought; the word properly signifies as a free gift; we did not eat what others voluntarily gave us, nor support ourselves by their charity. No: we eat our own bread, what we earned by our own diligence and labour, working with labour and travail night and day, i. e. 'using the utmost diligence, grudging no pains, sparing no hours night or day, that by our own employment of making tents, we might earn our bread with our own hands, and so might not be chargeable to you; the word properly signifies, bear hard upon and become burthenfome to them, by putting them to expences, they were not well able to support†. So careful was this blessed apostle of the ease and welfare of others, and of prejudicing in the least the success of his ministry, that he chose rather by the most assiduous labour, and indefatigable industry to maintain himself, than that those he preached to should be put to any difficulty, or become in the least unwilling to embrace his doctrine, through the apprehension of any charges that might attend it. Herein giving up his right to that maintenance he could have justly claimed, and might have insisted on, both from the reason of the thing, and his own apostolic character and authority.*

For he adds, *Not because we have not power, i. e. 'We did not work and labour night and day for our own support, because we had no power or right of a maintenance from you. This our work and employment gave us. Labouring amongst you for your conversion and salvation, we might have demanded the support we needed. Being engaged in your service, God and nature gave us a claim to a proper maintenance from you. But we gave up our right, and chose rather to support ourselves by our own industry and labour, that we might set ourselves as a model and pattern to you to imitate us; to make ourselves an ensample to you to follow us; i. e. to shew you the necessity of diligence, and the obligations you are under by your christian profession, to provide for the supply of your own wants by the labour of your own hands, and not to make yourselves, by idleness and sloth, an heavy and unprofitable burthen to others.'* And indeed if the apostles gave up their right to a maintenance which they could justly have insisted on, what possible claim can they have to the charity of others, who can labour for themselves, but will not? Or what obligation can we be under to support them, who will not take the proper pains to supply their own wants? The apostle's advice here will always hold good; "That if any would not work, neither should he eat."

We may from hence see the necessity of every person's filling up the duties of his particular character and station in life. No man was made for idleness. Some useful employment in life is equally necessary for rich and poor, and there are duties that fit and become all the various relations and conditions of our being. Labour and industry are properly the lot of the poorer and lower rank of mankind, that they may not become useless burthens of society, nor live upon the unearned charity and benevolence of others. But there are services of great usefulness and

* Dion. Halicar.

† Dion. Halicar.

importance that become the rich also, and are required of them, in order to their approving themselves to God and their own consciences. Whatever, therefore, our hands find to do, either in the services of the present life, or the more serious concerns that relate to a future, let us do it with all our might, as those who know the necessity of industry and care to our present honourable and comfortable support, and that it is equally necessary that we should “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, in order to make our calling and election sure.”

The apostle having, from his own example of diligence and labour, recommended industry and care to the Thessalonian converts, proceeds to put them in mind of a maxim that he had inculcated on them when he was present with them:

TEXT.

Verse 10. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any one would not work neither should he eat.*

COMMENTARY.

Or, as it is in the original, *If any one will not work, neither let him eat.* ‘If he refuses to maintain himself by his own industry, diligence, and labour, let him feel the effects of his own sloth, and do not you give him any thing to supply his wants. Let him not eat; let him starve, if he is able to work, and will not. It is not charity to support idleness, nor have they any right to eat bread, who can labour for it, but refuse to do it.’ Idleness hath been amongst all the wise part of mankind esteemed as exceeding criminal. Amongst the laws of Solon, the wise Athenian lawgiver, this was one *, ‘Let an idle person lie open to the accusation of every man.’ And by the constitution of † Draco, another lawgiver of Athens, it was punishable with death. It was criminal also by the laws of the ancient Egyptians, and the constitutions of the Roman emperors, and indeed amongst all wise and civilized nations ‡; idleness being inconsistent with the good of society, and nothing being more unquestionably reasonable, than that they who will contribute nothing to the welfare of society, should receive neither protection or benefit from it. And accordingly it is a law of the christian church and society, *If any man will not work, if he neglects the labours and duties of his proper station and character, neither let him eat.* The feeding such persons is not charity, but unreasonable encouragement of criminal idleness.

Having thus repeated the command he gave them when at Thessalonica, he adds the reason of it:

TEXT.

Verse 11. *For we hear that there are some which walk amongst you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.*

COMMENTARY.

The walking disorderly means, as hath been explained, either behaving in such a manner as though they belonged to no rank and order of mankind, and had no kind of service in life in which to employ themselves; or as persons who neglected the duty of their station, forsook the post, and broke the rank

* Diog. Laert. l. 1. § 55. Vid. Plut. 91. d. et 90. d. e.

† Plutar. p. 87. e. vit. Solon.

‡ Diod. Sic. l. 1. Herod.

of life assigned them. And this is truly the case of idle persons who work not at all, and refuse to employ themselves in any of the occupations and labours of mankind. It is renouncing the common services and duties of the world, as though they did not belong to us, or a shameful and criminal desertion of that particular station to which Providence hath appointed us.

It is no wonder that such persons, who will do nothing themselves, should be *busy-bodies*. There is a turn of words in the Greek that can scarcely be imitated in any other language. It would be nearer than our translation, if we were to render them, 'We hear there are some, who do no business, but are busy bodies;' or, 'who mind not their own affairs, but impertinently mind the affairs of every body else.' The original word we render, * *busy-bodies*, signifies, to be curious and inquisitive into the affairs of others, anxious and solicitous to know what belongs to them; or else impertinently to meddle, and to be officiously, needlessly, busily diligent in the things of others, in which we have no manner of real concern. Theophrastus, in his Characters, chap. 13. gives a true account of these busy and impertinent triflers. Nothing can be more hateful than such a temper, it is the natural effect of idleness. For as all persons must do something, if they are above minding their own affairs, and will not employ themselves in some proper business of their own, they will be prying into the affairs of others, and busy themselves about what doth not belong to them. This is an irrational and unchristian conduct, and they will do well to remember the following words of the apostle.

T E X T.

Verse 12. *Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

Those *that are such*, i. e. 'those busy impertinent meddlers in other persons affairs, *we command*.' The word signifies an authoritative injunction from a superior. *And exhort*, i. e. 'beseech and earnestly entreat them;' *by our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. 'in his name, person, and authority, by their regard to him, and their hope of salvation by him;' *that with quietness they work*, i. e. 'employ themselves in their own callings, and diligently discharge the duties of their station, *with quietness*, i. e. with silence, in opposition to that busy, tattling, trifling temper, and way of life they may have indulged to; or peaceably and orderly, so as to create no inconveniencies in the christian societies they belong to; by an impertinent running about and intermeddling with the affairs of others;' the word being applicable to both senses. *And that they eat their own bread*, i. e. 'the bread they earn by their own diligence and labour; support themselves, and provide for their own necessities by their own industry and care, without fondly living upon the charity of others, or burthening those who are under no obligations to maintain them;' bread being here comprehensive of all the necessities of life.

After this caution against impertinence, and admonition to diligence to the disorderly persons of the Thessalonian church, he gives them all a short but excellent piece of advice, and which is indeed of universal importance and obligation.

* Herodian.

T E X T.

Verse 13. *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.*

* The original word we render, *weary*, signifies 'to fail in any thing through negligence, sloth, or dejecting cowardice and fear of mind;' and the *well doing* here recommended, means, 'the right and regular discharge of those duties of life, which were suitable to every one's station in particular, as well as to the obligations of christianity in general.' And therefore the advice means, 'that they should persevere by diligence and industry, and the practice of every christian virtue, in their respective callings of life, to adorn their sacred character and profession, and never indulge to negligence, carelessness, and sloth, either in their own private concerns as men, or in the more important affair of their salvation as christians.'

And the more strongly to enforce this advice, he adds,

C O M M E N T A R Y.

T E X T.

Verse 14. *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The observation of the rules here given by the apostle, was necessary to the good order, credit, and welfare of the christian church; and therefore he expresseth himself in a more authoritative way, and commands obedience to the directions he gives them; not indeed in his own name, but in the name of Christ, whose servant he was, and by whose commission he acted. Grotius gives these words a different turn, agreeable enough to the original: 'If any man obey not our word, signify him, or send an account of him to me by letter.' But this doth not appear to me to be the apostle's intention in this place, though perfectly agreeable to the use of the expression in other writers; because it is not to be easily supposed, that the apostle could desire a letter to inform him about every idle person in the Thessalonian church, or had any other directions to give than such as were common to all cases of a like nature; especially as he designed this part of his letter as a direction to them, how persons of this complexion were to be dealt with, and gives particular orders relating to them. And therefore I think our own translation is the proper one, *If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note him*, i. e. 'if he will not work for his own bread, according as I have directed by this letter, if he will indulge a busy, impertinent, idle disposition, contrary to these my orders, *note him*, particularly observe him, set a mark on him, in order to avoid his company for such a disorderly practice.' And in this sense the original word is used by good writers †, viz. 'to take particular notice of any person or thing.' And this is agreeable to the apostle's style in other places, *I exhort you, brethren, mark those who occasion divisions and offences, and avoid them*, Rom. xvi. 17. And on the other hand, *Be ye followers of me, brethren, and mark those that so walk, as ye have us for an ensample*, Phil. iii. 17. So that they were to mark and take particular notice of the good and bad; the former for their imitation; the latter for their avoidance. For thus the apostle adds,

Note that man, and have no company with him. The word signifies, 'to mix or engage with him in friendly conversation †; avoid his company, enter into no fa-

* Εγκακιστε. Hesych.

† Dion. Hal. v. 2. p. 130. l. 31. 33.

'miliarities with him, but keep him at a distance, as one unworthy your friendship and brotherly regards.' And the reason of doing this was, as the apostle farther remarks,

That he might be ashamed. The original word is here very peculiar and emphatical, and carries in it the double notion of shame, and change of sentiment and conduct; and therefore it is singly used frequently in each sense; sometimes for being ashamed, sometimes for changing a person's counsel or behaviour; and sometimes inclusive of both*. And in this mixed comprehensive sense it is evidently used in the place before us, 'Have no company with him, that by avoiding him as unfit for conversation, he may see his fault, be ashamed of his disorderly practices, and amend his conduct.'

But in order to prevent their so behaving towards him, as might rather tend to exasperate than amend him, the apostle kindly adds,

T E X T.

Verse 15. *Yet count him not an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

That is, 'However you dislike his behaviour, and separate from him as unworthy the intimacy and affection of christian friendship, let not your dislike of his fault degenerate into hatred of his person, nor carry it to him with that forbidding distance, and open aversion, as though he was a professed enemy to the gospel, or you declared enemies to him; but admonish him as a brother.' The word † signifies rebuking, correcting, and chastising for a fault. And lest this rebuke or chastisement should be managed with an unfriendly temper, or with too great severity, the apostle adds, *Admonish, rebuke him as a brother*, i. e. 'with tenderness and affection, and an evident concern for his reformation and welfare, remembering that by his christian profession he is a brother, and as such, notwithstanding his faults, to be treated with that gentleness, forbearance and love, which may convince him that you wish him well, and only desire his amendment.'

Having thus finished his direction and advice in this affair, he subjoins an affectionate wish and prayer for them.

T E X T.

Verse 16. *Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you all.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The Lord of peace, is Christ, called by Isaiah, *the Prince of Peace*, because he is the great author and lover of peace, who hath reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God and to one another, creating peace between God and them, and commanding them to follow the things that make for peace, always to seek peace and pursue it. *May the Lord of peace give you peace*, dispose your minds to such a conduct, such diligence and care in your own affairs, and to such a quiet and inoffensive behaviour to one another, and towards all men, as may effectually contribute to the peace and good order of your society. *May the Lord of peace give you peace always*, such an established durable harmony and friendship amongst yourselves, as shall never be interrupted, either by the disorders of any of your own members, or by the malice and oppression of your enemies. And finally, *May the Lord of peace give you peace always by all means*; 'by the prudence of your own conduct, by every one's discharging,

* Hesych. Ælian, p. 240.

† Dion. Hal.

his proper duty, by encreasing dispositions of piety and virtue, by the amendment and reformation of every disorderly person amongst you, by protecting you from your enemies, or supporting your faith and patience under all your persecutions for the sake of Christ and his gospel; in a word, by all those methods that may tend to secure you the possession of this invaluable blessing. And in order to this, *May the Lord be with you all*; 'may his favour be your constant support, and from his fulness may you all receive every blessing that can be necessary to your protection and comfort.'

After this kind and friendly benediction, he subjoins what he calls the salutation, written with his own hand, probably writing his name in some peculiar and distinguishing manner, as an authentic characteristic, by which they might be assured which were his genuine epistles, and know them from all pretended and spurious ones.

T E X T.

Ver. 17. 18. *The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle: So I write, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

St. Paul seldom wrote his epistles with his own hand, especially the larger, but employed an amanuensis or secretary to write what he dictated. This might easily give occasion to artful and designing men, to forge letters in the apostle's name, and impose them on the christian church under his authority. And it seems that some person had attempted to deceive the Thessalonians in this manner, from what the apostle says in the second chapter of this epistle, ver. 2.: *That ye be not troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand*; intimating that some such letter, asserting the near approach of the day of judgment, had been handed about amongst them, as written by the apostle.

In order to prevent all frauds and impositions of this kind, the apostle lets them know, that there was one sure sign or token that he added to all his epistles, by regarding which they could not easily be deceived, viz. that he always used one form of salutation at the end of his epistles, and that this was always wrote with his own hand, '*The salutation of me Paul with my own hand*, i. e. written with my own hand, *which is the token*, sign, or distinguishing mark *in every epistle*, by which it may be known to be genuine, and dictated by me: *thus I write*: this is the character and hand I use, and this the form of the salutation added to the end of every letter: viz. *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* The favour of Christ, in all the valuable fruits and blessings of it, be with you all; with all the members of your church, whether Jews or Gentiles. *Amen.* God grant my prayer, and abundantly confirm it.' So that there were those two characteristics to distinguish all his epistles; the form of his concluding salutation, and its being wrote with his own hand. And accordingly we find that every one of St. Paul's epistles hath this form of salutation, though with some variation, at or very near the end of it.

The words following this salutation are not St. Paul's, but added by some injudicious and careless hand, viz. *This second epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.*

Athens. For as I observed in the introduction to this epistle, it was unquestionably wrote from Corinth, where the apostle sojourned a full year and half, and from whence he sent both his first and second letters to these Thessalonian converts. And if what I have said by way of explication of these *two* epistles hath contributed to the entertainment or instruction of christians, I shall be very far from regretting my labour. I shall conclude all with some general remarks upon the whole. And here we may consider

I. The Importance of the several doctrines delivered; such as are of the highest consequence to the well-being and support of religion, and to the piety, virtue, and salvation of mankind. For though these letters were written to the Thessalonian church in particular, and upon special occasions, yet the subjects are of universal concern, and what all men are interested in: such as the being of one God, even the father, in opposition to all false Gods, and objects of worship, and of one Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, in opposition to all false mediators, or mediums of worshipping the true God; the election of the Gentiles to be the church and kingdom of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and to obtain the benefit of eternal salvation; the certainty of the resurrection of all true believers from death and the grave, and their restoration to immortal life; the second appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to judgment, and the awful and solemn manner of that appearance; the important consequences of this glorious day, when all sincere christians shall be translated into the heavenly world to meet the Lord, and be for ever with him; and when he himself shall be glorified in and admired by his believing saints; and when he shall take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel, and punish them with an everlasting destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power. These are subjects worthy the spirit of revelation, and treated by the apostle in a manner becoming their dignity, without any of those low mixtures, that argue the frailty and imperfection of human reason. And agreeable to the majesty and worth of these sacred principles, are

II. The purity and excellency of the dispositions he recommends, and the virtues and duties he inculcates. Faith in God, hope in Christ, patience under afflictions, a believing expectation of the judgment-day, constancy in their adherence to truth and righteousness, habitual acknowledgment of God by prayer, thankfulness and gratitude to him for all his benefits; fervent charity to all men, and a continual encrease in the benevolent temper and disposition, manifested by all the instances of goodness and love; strict and universal purity of mind and body, abstinence from every kind and appearance of evil; a quiet, peaceable and inoffensive behaviour towards all men; diligence and care, labour and industry in mens respective stations and callings of life, for their own comfortable maintenance and support, and that they may be able to assist and support others under their necessities; in a word their walking worthy of God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory, by being unblamable in holiness, and in consequence of full conviction and judgment, holding fast and immoveably adhering to that which is good. Such directions of piety and moral virtue are every way suitable to the importance and force of those principles and motives by which they are recommended and enforced; and were but professed christians duly impressed with the belief of the one, and careful in their several ranks to practice the others;
how

how high would the credit of christianity rise, and how substantial would be the demonstration of its own intrinsic worth, and of its being indeed a revelation from the God of holiness and truth.

III. Suitable to those sacred principles which he taught, and the holiness of those precepts which he gave, was the purity and exemplary unblamableness of his own behaviour; worthy the high character of a messenger from God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ. As he taught others to turn from idols, he was a worshipper himself of the true God. As he commanded others continually to pray, how ardently, how affectionately doth he pray to God in their behalf! How warm is he in his thanksgivings to God for the blessings he had been instrumental in procuring them, to encourage them in all things to give thanks to God! How large, how affectionate was his own charity; that breathes in almost every line of these two epistles! how great his diligence, how indefatigable his labours, in that he wrought with his own hands, day and night for his own bread, amidst all his cares and endeavours to impart to them the gospel of God; that he might recommend to them by his own practice, that honest care to provide for themselves, which by the authority of his divine master, he enjoined them; and in imitation of his blessed Lord and Saviour, who went about continually doing good! How disinterested were his views, and how free from all suspicions of covetousness and a worldly spirit! how humbly did he demean himself, seeking glory from no man, and even receding from the rights of his own apostolic character and dignity! how absolutely free from every suspicion of impurity and uncleanness, behaving holily, justly, and unblamably amongst all who believed: how bold and resolute, fearless of danger, and unconquerable by persecution, continually preaching the gospel of God in the midst of contention, and the most furious and enraged opposition of his enemies! how prudent his conduct, how blamelessly artful his management in propagating the gospel of Christ, commanding, exhorting, beseeching, as the nature of his subject required, and as might most effectually persuade those to whom he preached. So that all things conspired to heighten their esteem for the gospel, and to bring them to, and fix them in the acknowledgment and belief of the truth in Christ; and that there might be no suspicions of the truth of his character in these respects, he appeals in the most solemn manner to God the searcher of the heart, and to the Thessalonians themselves; who, had they been conscious to the contrary, must have abhorred his dissimulation and impiety, and been tempted to reject the gospel for the crimes of him who preached it. And that nothing might be wanting to give credit to it, and recommend it to the acceptance of mankind:

IV. He was enabled to confirm it by miraculous works and powers in the midst of them, for the truth of which he openly appeals to them his witnesses and judges. The gospel he preached to them came not in word only, but in power, and in the holy Ghost, and in much assurance; with the most abundant and undeniable demonstration of its divine original and authority: and his appealing to them for the truth of this, is the most authentic confirmation of his testimony; since had they not been convinced of it, it must absolutely have destroyed his credit and sunk his authority; and instead of being a means of confirming them in their profession, and supporting his own character amongst them, when distant from them; must have made them look on him as an impostor, and treat him with the neglect and contempt that he would have deserved: so that these epistles carry in them all the genuine marks of sincerity, that any writings can be attended with;

the

the cause of christianity appears in them unsuspected; the doctrines and precepts of it are all worthy of God, and the evidence of its divine original substantial and immutable. Adhere therefore to christianity, as contained in these and other the sacred writings of the New Testament. Be not ashamed of its principles! they are divine and eternal truths! exercise those virtues, and practice those duties which they recommend. They are the sure paths to happiness and future glory; and thus may the Lord of peace give you peace always, by all means, and establish your hearts unblamable in holiness, before God even our Father, at the coming of Christ with all his saints. May his grace be with you all for evermore.

Amen.

F I N I S.

Chandler, Samuel / White, Nathaniel / Paulus

A Paraphrase And Notes On The Epistles Of St. Paul To The Galatians And
Ephesians With Doctrinal And Practical Obervations ; Together With A
Critical And Practical Commentary On The Two Epsitles Of St. Paul To The
Thessalonians

London 1777

Regensburg, Staatliche Bibliothek -- 999/Script.918
urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11116823-1